Interview with Mr. Douglas R. Keene

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

DOUGLAS R. KEENE

Interviewed by: Charles Stewart Kennedy

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Q: And you go by Doug?

KEENE: Doug, yes.

Q: Let's start at the beginning: when and where were you born?

KEENE: 1944, Malden, Massachusetts.

Q: On the outskirts of Boston; my wife used to live there. Can you tell me something about your family background? Let's start with your father's side first. Where did the Keenes come from; what do you know about them?

KEENE: He grew up in Medford, Massachusetts; went to school in the Boston suburbs, Boston University and then Tufts, became a teacher and taught at Medford High School.

Q: Do you know anything about where the Keenes originally came from or anything like that?

KEENE: Not really. My father, who is still alive, claims not to know an awful lot either beyond his parents. They were also from Massachusetts.

Q: Then your father graduated from Boston University, and then went to Tufts.

KEENE: Yes, he had a masters degree.

Q: Masters degree in what?

KEENE: Accounting.

Q: Accounting! Ah-hah!

KEENE: He taught accounting in high school.

Q: How about your mother's side. What do you know about her background?

KEENE: She's a Robinson; also grew up in Medford, Massachusetts. Her father worked for the Customs Service at the Customs House in Boston. And then after he retired from that he was a guide at the Paul Revere House in Boston.

Q: Ah! How about your mother's education?

KEENE: She's a college graduate, that was at Lowell State Teacher's College, then she also became a teacher.

Q: You came from a teaching background.

KEENE: Right.

Q: You have brothers and sisters?

KEENE: One brother...a younger brother, a couple of years younger.

Q: Did you grow up in...not Medford; where did you grow up?

KEENE: Grew up in Reading, MA.

Q: Redding, MA. What was Reading like when you were a kid?

KEENE: Typical suburb, I guess, about 20,000 population, a pretty nice town. Pretty prosperous really, not that I was so aware of it then.

Q: Where did you go to grammar school?

KEENE: In Reading.

Q: How was Reading, in school there? How did you find it?

KEENE: Well, they had pretty good schools. I went to a succession of them—grammar school, and then junior high, and then high school.

Q: All through Reading?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: In your family, where did they fit...well, in the first place, was it a Catholic, Protestant, what sort of family?

KEENE: It wasn't terribly diverse—pretty lily white. I don't know what the percentages of Catholic and Protestant were, but there were Catholics and there were Protestants.

Q: Were you Catholic or Protestant?

KEENE: Protestant.

Q: Protestant. Politically, did your family fall into any particular...

KEENE: Very Republican.

Q: Very Republican. In Massachusetts...well, I guess they often had Republican governors. I mean...

KEENE: There were a few, and we had Senator Brooke, who was a Republican. A liberal Republican, but...

Q: Were you much of a reader? What kind of a student were you?

KEENE: Yes, I read a lot. I was a pretty good student, got good grades.

Q: What sort of things in books that you read as a kid stuck with you?

KEENE: I read a fair amount of history; I liked that from the beginning. Not so much novels, but non-fiction stuff.

Q: Well did you get into the history of Massachusetts at all?

KEENE: Well, we had to study that a little bit in school; I think it was a requirement, and it was a month-long chapter, or something.

Q: Oh yeah, but I was just wondering if you got around and... Did you get into Boston much?

KEENE: Yes, we'd go to Boston. My mother liked to go shopping...dragged us along.

Q: By the time you got to high school, how did you find high school? Was it demanding, or not?

KEENE: Not particularly. I got by without doing a lot of work.

Q: How about sports? Were you into sports?

KEENE: I played some sports: baseball and hockey. I wasn't that great an athlete, but I enjoyed it.

Q: What courses did you particularly like, and what ones maybe you didn't you like?

KEENE: I liked history, again, not so much math or the sciences.

Q: 1944. So the memories of World War II. Did your father get involved in World War II?

KEENE: Yes, he served, and his brother—my uncle—was killed in the war.

Q: Were you aware of world events while you were growing up there much?

KEENE: Yes. I don't know about in depth, but certainly, yes. I mean the Korean War, and Sputnik—we were aware of them. I used to read the newspaper from a very fairly young age.

Q: What newspaper?

KEENE: At that time it was the Boston Globe.

Q: Did your mother and father, would they ever take you off on trips to an island?

KEENE: Yes, we did some trips, usually to more or less historic places. I remember one to Williamsburg when we were still fairly young, other places like that. And we took a trip—a rather memorable trip—across country.

Q: Oh my.

KEENE: About six weeks, back and forth.

Q: Driving back and forth?

KEENE: Yes. Mostly camping.

Q: How did you find that?

KEENE: In the national parks and things. That was great. I was like 14 and had barely been out of New England.

Q: When you got into high school, did you get involved in many extracurricular activities?

KEENE: There were some, but I don't remember it being all that heavy...yearbook, senior class play, and a few things like that.

Q: Well then, with both your parents having gone to college, were you on sort of the college track?

KEENE: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Where did you go?

KEENE: Colby College, Waterville, Maine.

Q: Why Colby?

KEENE: I liked it. I wanted to not live at home. I looked at Tufts, but my parents said, “Well, if you go there, you'll have to live at home...save all that money.” So, we visited several colleges. It was really pretty; it had a new campus. It wasn't so pretty in winter, but I didn't know; we didn't visit it in winter.

Q: One of those places, eh? I went to Williams and the winter was a little more than what one wanted. What was Colby like?

KEENE: It was a small liberal arts school. At that time I think they had about 1200 students. They were reasonably well-known for their government department, which was what I was interested in. That was another reason I wanted to go there.

Q: Was it co-educational?

KEENE: Yes, it was. It wasn't “co-educational;” they had a different term for it. Coordinated, or something. But then they changed it while we were there to, formally to co-educational.

Q: Well, there was something called Colby Junior College.

KEENE: Yes. There still is.

Q: Does that have any relation to...

KEENE: Only that it was the recipient of a grant from the same man. That's in New Hampshire, and it's near Dartmouth. I had a girlfriend there, for a while.

Q: I had a girlfriend there, too. Well, what about there; you majored in government?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: Was there any particular aspect of government that you were particularly interested in, or wanted to do, or...

KEENE: International Relations. I already had decided that I would try to get into the Foreign Service.

Q: How did that come about? So few people know about the Foreign Service.

KEENE: I don't know. I had this...I still have it, too, this book, Your Future in the Foreign Service, that I read in high school. I said, “that sounded pretty fascinating; I'd like to try that.”

Q: Had you run into anybody in high school or at Colby who had been in the Foreign Service?

KEENE: No, though a couple of the professors were well aware of it. One fellow studenBob Gelbarlater joined as well.

Q: Did you find yourself concentrating on any particular aspect, any area...were you studying European or Asian government?

KEENE: There were courses in European, particularly English, law and history, and I took a seminar on Japan, which was new to me and kind of far out at the time, and that neck of the woods. I took pretty much everything they offered.

Q: While you were in college—even in high school—did you end up with summer jobs?

KEENE: Yes, I always had summer jobs. I was a cook.

Q: Where did you cook?

KEENE: In Maine.

Q: In a camp?

KEENE: Well, no—it was a beach community, seasonal. It had a lot of seasonal restaurants, and things like that.

Q: Where was that?

KEENE: A little place called Ocean Park, Maine, which is really near Old Orchard Beach, a kind of unique place. It was a Chautauqua community...and still is—only about one of eight still in business. But they had a restaurant there. In those days there were still a lot of boarding houses. People would come for the summer, didn't always have a car. There were five or six restaurants there. They're down to one now. I still go there; I ended up buying a cottage. It turns out my wife's family used to go there, so she loved it. And it was great in the Foreign Service, because when the family needed a place to go in the summer, my wife and kids, they'd go there. We had rented out our house down here, so it worked out really well. I bought it when property there was really cheap; I could never afford it now.

Q: What year did you graduate from Colby?

KEENE: '66.

Q: Did you get involved in...were there demonstrations about Vietnam and all that?

KEENE: There were, yes. I didn't get much involved. I got married young; we were married when we were 20, so it was a little more important to try to earn a little money.

Q: Where was your wife from? What was her background?

KEENE: Also started out...it's a small world...also born in Malden, Mass. And grew up originally in Medford, but then her family moved to Rhode Island. And then she worked in the same restaurant I did—that's how we met, turned out we were both going to Colby. When we were in our late junior year, we got married.

Q: When you graduated in '66, were you able to make contact with the Foreign Service at that point, or what?

KEENE: Yes, I'd already taken the exam, but I hadn't heard back. I took the exam as a senior. That was kind of funny too; they gave it in Bangor, and there was a huge snowstorm that day, and I was the only guy who showed up—out of 35 or so who were supposed to take it. It was good; the examiner got me a cup of coffee. I remember that. I had taken that, but I hadn't heard, so I also took the civil service exam. I got an offer of a job with the IRS (Internal Revenue Service), and I took it. I was an office auditor with them for about six months in Worcester, Massachusetts. Then I got the call from the Department (of State), saying that I had been put on the register and selected.

Q: Do you recall the oral exam, any of the questions?

KEENE: I do.

Q: What were they?

KEENE: I had to go to Boston for that, and they had set up a table with green felt on it—all very intimidating. Three former ambassadors were on the panel. They asked me a really broad range of questions, from politics to literature. In fact, they asked me about a book that I had just read, and I couldn't remember it.

Q: There's that awful feeling when you just freeze.

KEENE: Yes. Absolutely. I can't remember today the title of it, but it was all about Michelangelo and his career. I couldn't remember it.

Q: The Power and the Glory.

KEENE: Yes, something like that.

Q: Yes, Irving Stone.

KEENE: Stone, it was. A pretty broad range of questions. Oh yes—when I was at Colby I did a semester exchange program at Fisk University, in Nashville, a historically black college. And one of the examiners was black, and he seemed to like that a lot. Maybe that helped.

Q: So you came into the Foreign Service when?

KEENE: '67. January '67.

Q: I assume you came down to Washington and took your...

KEENE: Yep.

Q: What were they talking about when you came in, because this was just the beginning of our buildup in Vietnam?

KEENE: Yes. That was talked about a lot—Vietnam and Laos, Southeast Asia.

Q: So, how did that work for you? You were married so this meant you would go or not?

KEENE: I was the very first married officer involuntarily sent to Vietnam—one of my claims to fame.

Q: Firstly, how did you find the A-100 course?

KEENE: I found it quite interesting. I learned a lot; I mean, I didn't know how to write cables, or conduct visa interviews, or any of that stuff. And I didn't know the culture of the Department or of Washington, so I thought it was a very, very useful course.

Q: How did your wife feel about coming into the Foreign Service?

KEENE: I think she liked that; she liked the idea of traveling, living overseas. What she didn't like was when I got assigned to Vietnam.

Q: You went to Vietnam from when to when?

KEENE: Well, at first I took Vietnamese at the Vietnam Training Center in Arlington Towers.

Q: In the basement. In the garage.

KEENE: In the garage, right. That was ten months, then I guess they gave us another month of area studies, and so it would be...we went in April of '68.

Q: This would be after Tet (a North Vietnamese offensive waged at the time of the lunar new year)?

KEENE: Just after Tet.

Q: Where did you go?

KEENE: Go Cong.

Q: Where?

KEENE: In the delta, Go Cong Province. I was in Saigon for about a month first.

Q: You were in the delta from when to when?

KEENE: This was 1967. We were in CORDS I. CORDS was the acronym for Civil Operations, Revolutionary Development Support. This was later changed to Rural Development. It was part of MAC. MACV/CORDS. First group through. Very interesting. President Johnson had the CORDS I to the White House and then they lined the group up around the President, invited the media in and Johnson gave a little speech, talking

about the new CORDS program, calling us “Warriors for Peace.” (Some of the guys from that group are planning a first ever reunion later this year, so that should be fun.) It was 27 months. I got there in April and left two years and three months later.

Q: So you left in July or so of '70. What part of the delta were you in?

KEENE: It was IV Corps, but it was northern IV Corps. It's a small province. A lot of people haven't heard of it. The biggest close province was My Tho.

Q: Did you know by any chance Howard Gross?

KEENE: The name's familiar.

Q: Because Howard was down there; I visited him down there. He was in My Tho. I was in Saigon at the time as consul general at the embassy.

In the first place, what was the situation when you were there? It was shortly after the Tet offensive.

KEENE: Yes, yes. Well, there was still plenty of visible damage in the town. I started out working in the province capital as a New Life Development Officer, (which was pacification), but then they eventually had four young FSO's (foreign service officers), including myself, and they decided that we had four districts, and each of us should concentrate on one district. So I did that for a little while in Hoa Tan District, and then when the army major who was district senior advisor, when his tour came to an end, I became district senior advisor, and spent all my time out there for the rest of my tour.

Q: What were you doing?

KEENE: Well, I was working with my counterpart, who was the district chief, and we were also doing military operations, we focused on pacification. We built a school and a medical clinic in every village, and we had ten villages in the district, something like

80 hamlets. We electrified one of the villages as a demonstration project, dug wells, paved roads, built markets. We were doing all of this “hearts and mind” stuff; at the same time we had military training teams there and military guys on the district team would go out with the Vietnamese on patrol, ambushes, stuff like that. We also visited local officials in their villages and hamlets on a regular basis to find out what was going on and where the problems were. It was a lot of responsibility for someone 223 years old. You were in charge of your District Team, Mobile Training Teams operating in your district, you could call in air strikes or refuse permission for them and you had $10,000 a month for development projects. It was quite a while in the Foreign Service before I had a comparable degree of responsibility.

Q: Was there much fighting?

KEENE: There was fighting. Not as fierce as up in I Corps, but we lost a few guys. And we'd get mortared, stuff like that.

Q: Who were you fighting? Regulars, or...

KEENE: We had both. We had local VC (Viet Cong), and we had one mainline NVA (North Vietnam Army) division that would come in and out. In a heavily jungled area, they'd come in there and have their R&R (Rest and Recreation) and sometimes they'd attack someone while they were there. It was known as the Coconut Grove and it was on the border with Dinh Tuong, and they'd go back and forth. We had in My Tho area—forget precisely the name of their base—we had the U.S. ninth division, and they would often try to get our permission to conduct operations in Go Cong, and we would never let them, because they were indiscriminate: they'd kill anything that moved. Created more problems than they solved.

Q: What was your impression of the leadership of the Vietnamese, civilian and military, when you were there in your area?

KEENE: I got to know my counterpart and liked him personally, but there was considerable corruption. You could actually tell they were stealing us blind, but you couldn't figure out quite how they were doing it. And I suppose in retrospect it was petty corruption; they'd steal some cement or some rebar, and resell it and stuff like that. We didn't give them the money directly; we spent that ourselves. The Corps gave each district $10,000 a month of AIK funds (Assistance in Kind)—recycled local currency, Vietnamese currency, which after a while you had to have a shoebox to carry $100.

Q: How did you find the Corp's operation, the direction from Saigon?

KEENE: I did think it was pretty good. I met with William Colby a few times, who was the head of it at that time, but more often we'd deal with the Corps guys. For a while that was John Paul Vann, and then Colonel William Wilson—Coal Bin Willie, as he was known. He was given to inspecting things down to that level of detail. Vann was an impressive guy; Wilson was not so much. Our local province senior advisor was a retired colonel who wasn't really all that impressive.

Q: Was Vann always pushing to get things done?

KEENE: He was a pretty dynamic guy. My little district—we did okay, probably because we weren't very high up on the radar screen of the North Vietnamese, so they were generally satisfied when they came up to inspect there.

Q: It was sort of a "live and let live" situation between the local populace and the Viet Cong?

KEENE: There was certainly a large element of that. There were clashes every now and then, or our PRU (Provincial Reconnaissance Unit) would go out and capture somebody, but it wasn't high level. Lob mortars in every now and then. We'd do H and I—harassment and interdiction—fire every night. You knew it was a war zone, but if you weren't stupid

about it you could get around and go to hamlets and villages and talk to people and do projects.

Q: Well having been there two years, it made you one of the old hands.

KEENE: Yes, I guess so.

Q: How did you feel about the war? Did you feel we were making progress?

KEENE: Actually, yes, on a local level. I wasn't so sure about the national level. I remember thinking, for example, that the invasion of Cambodia was a huge mistake... things like that. But you wondered about how they went about trying to fight the war; I thought a lot of that was really misguided. But locally we did okay; I thought we were trying to do the right thing.

Q: You left there in 1970. How did you feel? Whither South Vietnam from your perspective at that time?

KEENE: I guess I thought it was a toss-up. I wasn't quite sure which way it would go, but it was certainly no sure thing that we were going to win. We never understood what we were doing.

Q: Who were some of your colleagues you dealt with there—the corps people? Were they sort of with the program or were you all a bit bemused, or how would you describe it?

KEENE: Well, I don't know. I dealt more often with the people on my district team than I did with...We'd go in once a week into the capital and go talk to the people in charge there and say “This is what we need. Can you give us some resources?” And that was okay; they were fairly responsive. The place was awash in money, so if you needed some extra cement or rebar, or whatever, you could usually get it. We had a couple of sergeants with us, they knew how to get anything. You wanted a jeep? They'd go get it.

Q: In my era we used to call them “midnight requisitions”

KEENE: They did a lot of that.

Q: The sergeants are of course the people who run the army anyway. Who were the people you were dealing with in these villages? Pretty much peasants?

KEENE: These were peasants, but some were elected or appointed as village chief or hamlet chief. Usually we'd talk to them. Sometimes it would be, after we got that up and going, the People's Self Defense Force chief. Then there were district officials: they had a health chief, and an education chief, sometimes military, sometimes civilian. We also did a lot with the RD (Revolutionary Development) Cadre. The district cadre chief was a dynamic, resourceful guy, who really had a good feel for what was going on in the area.

Q: Were you able to get reasonable teachers, doctors or medical attendants down into your level?

KEENE: Yes, we were. Teachers. The medical people weren't doctors, mostly; there were a couple of doctors around, but they were, you know, technicians. That's basically what we had to offer, too; we had medics who would help them set up, try to teach them.

Q: Well then, where was your wife? Did she locate in Bangkok, or somewhere else?

KEENE: She went to Taipei.

Q: Taipei. How did she find that?

KEENE: She liked it very much. They had a group of people in the same situation, and they were in pretty nice housing. It was formerly AID (Agency for International Development) housing—AID had begun to phase out of Taipei, and they took that over. It

wasn't a bad life. She studied Chinese scroll painting, Chinese, Chinese cooking, and God knows what else.

Q: In '70, where did you go?

KEENE: I got assigned to Warsaw, but first a year—10 months—of language, so I came back here for Polish language training.

Q: How did you find Polish?

KEENE: Hard.

Q: Going from Vietnamese, which is hard, to Polish, which is hard...

KEENE: Yes, but eventually.

Q: You take well to languages, you think?

KEENE: I had a middling MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test) score but I could learn them; sometimes the beginning it was a little rough, but after a while it came. Later I dabbled in all sorts of things—Urdu, Arabic...

Q: So about '71 you went out to—where did you go?

KEENE: Warsaw.

Q: Warsaw. What were you doing there?

KEENE: Vice-consul: visas.

Q: And you were in Poland from when to when?

KEENE: Two years—'71-'73. Walter Stoessel was the ambassador. He was very accessible, we played paddle tennis with him. Excellent, knowledgeable ambassador.

Q: What was the consular section like?

KEENE: Very busy—pretty big, considering it was a Communist country. Everybody had a cousin in Chicago. Very high refusal rate. Congressmen—some congressmen didn't like that. The Department failed to back us up and we just crumbled. But in '73 after the Paris Accords were signed with the Vietnamese, they sent me back to Saigon on a TDY (temporary duty) to monitor the cease-fire. They sent 44 of us, I think there were, back, and I think I got that honor because I was the only officer they had who spoke Polish and Vietnamese, and the Poles were on the ICCS (International Commission on Control and Supervision). And so they set us up—me and the other guy who spoke Polish (but not Vietnamese), in I think what was the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) safe house down by the Saigon River—it was great. We were supposed to have the Poles over you know and entertain them and subvert them.

Q: Where were you assigned now?

KEENE: Saigon.

Q: What were sort of your feelings as you went out there about the peace accord?

KEENE: We worked in the embassy that time, and they set up something called provincial reporting in that time. We were all given a corps to follow, and every day—and you know they set up those consulates in all the corps. They were reporting, and we were supposed to—four of us—put together a daily report, and then do some longer term think tank things. So, they gave me I Corps, probably because I had never been there before.

Q: That's the one to the north.

KEENE: Yes, so I went up, traveled and visited several times...trying to figure out what was going on. That's what we were supposed to do.

Q: You were there from when to when?

KEENE: That was just three months. I guess January through March.

Q: Was much happening at that point?

KEENE: No. There was a momentary lull. Our troops were leaving, and it was a little surreal. Under the accord, the North Vietnamese were allowed to set up offices or little compounds in the South, in the provincial capitals. You'd walk around Da Nang and see this guy with a red star on his helmet—it was kind of weird. There was a little lull in fighting then, and it's when the POW's (prisoners of war) were released during that period. We were on tap to help out with that, though it didn't prove necessary. And some South Vietnamese prisoners were released. I remember I was up in Hue at the time and saw the truckloads of POW's drive past as they came out.

Q: Did you get any feel for how the South Vietnamese government viewed this development?

KEENE: Not well. They thought they were being kind of abandoned...or at least a step toward that, which is how it turned out. I don't know, within the embassy you could get every view possible, from the “it's hopeless,” to people who still believed with great fervor. There were some people who stayed there forever. They really got into it.

Q: Did you have any desire to hang on there, or was this just something to get through?

KEENE: I always liked Vietnam, when they weren't shooting at you. But it always meant separation, and that was a problem.

Q: You left your wife behind in Warsaw?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: Let's go back to...again, when you left Vietnam the second time, did you feel the peace accords were going to hold?

KEENE: No, I didn't. It seemed to be more for domestic political reasons than a good, solid agreement to me.

Q: Back in Warsaw...during the time—this would be '71 to '73—how would you say American-Polish relations were at the time?

KEENE: Well, it wasn't the worst, but it was still very much a pro-Soviet, communist government, and they were still putting bugs in the embassy, and in our houses, and following us around. I don't think you can at all say close, but it was proper.

Q: The visa cases: Were Poles able to easily get passports to go to the United States?

KEENE: If they were just regular old working-class, or farmers, peasants, whatever... they could. If you were more highly educated you might have more difficulty...or if you got in somebody's bad graces, you might have a much harder time. The guy with the foreign exchange...all those people. Well, you know, they went over there and they worked and they sent the money back, and it was a significant amount...I forget how much.

Q: Was there a problem with giving a visitor's visa? What Pole would want to go to the United States and then come back?

KEENE: They'd come back after they qualified for social security. Really. We passed out thousands of checks every month. That's why we had such a high refusal rate; it just

doesn't make any common sense that poor farmers wanted to see Disney Land. These people were not going to be tourists; they were going to work.

Q: Would you say Congress was breathing down your neck?

KEENE: Yes. We had Polish-American congressmen; we had congressmen from Chicago whose constituents were upset...that so many of their relatives were being refused a visa.

Q: So, if you refused, what would usually happen?

KEENE: We'd get a lot of congressional letters. It didn't usually make any difference to us, but it made some difference to somebody, somewhere.

Q: But did you often end up issuing a visa?

KEENE: No. Not at first. Not until we had instructions to the contrary.

Q: Where would the instructions come from?

KEENE: I'm not sure. I think from the Department, but...probably from the Consular Bureau, but I'm not sure.

Q: That must have been a little discouraging.

KEENE: It was. I agree. And we had a lot of CODELs (congressional delegations) actually. I remember being a control officer for one, and he was Polish-American. He was friendly enough to me, but then he went back and wrote a letter to the Department saying “I hear that this fellow Keene is selling visas.” So I got investigated.

Q: What did he base his complaint on?

KEENE: Well, he wanted to have, hire a maid, and when we found out about it, we failed to issue the visa. We even had letters he'd written to her in bad Polish, saying “don't tell

the consul." I think he wanted revenge. He was a piece of work, anyway. He later actually went to jail for selling special visa legislation for cash. Gene Boster, the DCM, backed up on that one, earning the sobriquet of "clean Gene". I should add that there was an especially close group of mostly younger officers then. More than any other post I ever served at we stayed in touch. I still feel close to many of them. We have held several get togethers over the years. We had a 35th reunion a couple of years ago that was very well attended, including Mary Ann Stoessel and Gene Boster.

Q: This congressman was?

KEENE: Henry Helstoski.

Q: Who?

KEENE: Henry Helstoski of New Jersey.

Visas were not a lot of fun.

Q: Did you do that the whole time?

KEENE: Yes. I was supposed to move into the political section for the third year, and I actually edited the morning—we did a morning publication with the British Embassy of highlights of the Polish press, and I was doing that. But I got a promotion, and the promotion was on condition that I stay in the consular cone. So I asked around—the DCM (deputy chief of mission) and others—and got advice. They said, "take the promotion while you can." So I did. So I decided I wouldn't be there a third year doing visas, so I left after two years.

Q: Did you get involved in all citizen services, welfare, American services?

KEENE: Oh yes.

Q: What sort of things were you doing in that?

KEENE: Arrests, and missing persons, and one—I remember that one—one lady visited and she brought her aged mother who had Alzheimer's, and she wandered out of the hotel. We were looking all over Warsaw for her and the Poles were helpful. They put out radio bulletins. She was found dead and the lady tried to lay the blame on us for her own negligence. .

Q: Did you have any presidential visits?KEENE: Yes, one presidential visit. That was Nixon. That just involved an incredible amount of work. Eight hundred people came with him. We had Kissinger, Scowcroft, Erlichman, and Haldeman, the whole cabinet.

Q: What piece of the operation did you get?

KEENE: I had housing...for 800; I think that was actually more rooms than existed in Warsaw at the time, so the Poles let us use a couple of palaces, too. And I was also Haldeman's control officer. That was kind of interesting—but a lot of work. The advance teams and arrogant, pushy, political appointees.

Q: I guess there was also, in a place like Poland, which is a rich vote community in the United States, you had all sorts of Polish-American politicians hanging on, too.

KEENE: Yes, a lot of that. They just brought a lot of people, and a lot of press, and it was the kind of place where “we don't like the local toilet paper,” so we'll import toilet paper, and we'll import water, and just all kinds of stuff that went on at the taxpayer's expense. Somehow we got through that.

Q: Did the Polish security forces give you and your wife a difficult time?

KEENE: Well, we were bugged, and we were followed, but they didn't personally harass us, no. In fact, if you got lost, you could stop and say “tell me, how do I get to Gdansk?” and they'd tell you, so it could be useful.

Q: Yes, sort of like a guardian angel over there.

KEENE: And they did that, particularly when you were new, and I think after they figured out that you were on the up and up, it decreased, you could tell.

Q: Were you able to make any contacts with Poles?

KEENE: Yes, but it was hard, because everybody knew that if you got too close, that person was going to be pulled in for questioning, shown photos of themselves sitting in your living room, they had recordings...So people were wary of getting too close.

Q: Did you have any feel for wanting to be an Eastern European hand and that?

KEENE: Yes, for a while I did. I had studied Russian in college and wanted to serve in Moscow, but it never happened.

Q: Well then you left Poland when?

KEENE: In '73.

Q: '73. Where did you go?

KEENE: Karachi, Pakistan.

Q: You're moving around! You were in Karachi from when to when?

KEENE: '73 to '75.

Q: What was Karachi like at the time?

KEENE: Really a horrible place. It was overcrowded, filthy, dirty, chaotic—traffic was unbelievable. And there was very little of historic interest, because before the partition itwas just a backwards fishing village and never had any real history to it. It just grew up really, really fast after partition. So, the interesting parts in Pakistan were elsewhere, like Lahore, Peshawar, and the hill stations. I was a consul, and we had huge numbers of visa applicants there, most of whom if you gave them a visa, they would never be seen again—the same situation. Not fun.

Q: Who was the consul general there?

KEENE: Gordon Tiger.

Q: How would you describe American-Pakistani relations at that particular time—'73 to '75?

KEENE: They were pretty good then. That was the Bhutto era (I issued Benazir's visa to study at Radcliffe), so he was elected; it wasn't the military government that you saw so much of, and things were pretty close.

Q: Had the China connection already opened at that point?

KEENE: Yes, it had. They were up there building roads and providing military equipment.

Q: Also, Karachi today, of course, is a very dangerous place. But there wasn't a fundamentalist problem at the time?

KEENE: No. I mean, you could see the pretty good educational system they inherited from the British was starting to crumble, and the birth rate was extremely high. You could see that they didn't have a great future. But no, we didn't have too much of that.

Q: Was there much concern about war with India when you were there?

KEENE: Not high. I'm trying to remember now, my dates. One had occurred not too far in the past.

Q: I guess that the one that occurred then was the one between—over the independence of Bangladesh.

KEENE: Yes.

Q: That was around '72 or something like that.

KEENE: That was actually just as I was leaving Warsaw, so that would have been maybe '71. Again, there was a lot of fall out from that, a lot of talk about that...but

Q: On the visa side, was it mainly sitting there and saying "no, no, no"?

KEENE: Pretty much. And that's not popular. My consul general didn't like it too much; he was getting phone calls all the time about interceding in visa cases.

Q: How did you find the Pakistani staff there?

KEENE: The consular section staff had been there a long time, and they were pretty professional—certainly experienced. The culture of corruption was very pervasive, though, in Pakistan, so you never were quite sure and you had to keep very alert to what they were up to. They could be really good, but some of the other consulate staff that had been there awhile were good, too. Pakistanis can be arrogant, but some of them can be quite competent.

Q: As you were doing this, were there any spots in the United States that had particular Pakistani immigrant communities?

KEENE: Yes. Let's see if I can remember: they were California, and maybe around this area. But I don't know—there was a colony in the DC (District of Columbia) area.

Q: Did you have much contact with Pakistanis socially?

KEENE: Quite a bit, quite a bit. We had some friends and then there was a fairly active official representational routine there. We had some nice housing because the embassy had been there, moved up to Islamabad, but had kept the houses, so we had places that were big enough to entertain in. The consul general had a mansion!

Q: Did you get up to Islamabad much, or not?

KEENE: Yes, a fair amount. We'd hold our own little in-country consular conferences every six months or so at the posts. We had four posts there. Besides Karachi and Islamabad, we had Lahore and Peshawar. Peshawar then was a one-man post, but they did do visas. And we went up a couple of times as tourists; we flew up to Islamabad. A friend of mine in the embassy there loaned me his car, and we drove up to Afghanistan—up into the mountains, you know—Swat, and...I don't even remember all the—the Murray Hills, old British hill station. And we tried to get around Lahore, which was a particular interesting place—a lot of historical buildings there.

Q: Did you pick up sort of the attitude of your Pakistani contacts vis-#-vis their neighbors or the Indians?

KEENE: No. And they weren't all hostile, either. I mean, they're the same people, just Hindus versus Muslims. So actually a lot of people still had relatives in India, and this, that and the other thing, and they weren't averse to visiting when they could. There were periods when you could and periods when you couldn't. And we took a trip to Delhi, too.

Q: I'm trying to think. Was much happening up in Afghanistan at that point?

KEENE: No. That was pre-Soviet invasion.

Q: That was '78...'79.

KEENE: No, we were able to go up, cross the border, drive around, go up to Bamiyan and see those statues that the Taliban later destroyed. Our kids had blond hair, though, and when they'd see that, the villagers would throw rocks at them.

Q: Really?

KEENE: Yes. So we bought them turbans. Put the turbans on them and the problem went away. It was pretty primitive; you can see why they have the problems that they have. It was like going back a couple of centuries. Beautiful—it's a beautiful country.

Q: Well then, it must have been about time for you to go back to Washington.

KEENE: Oh yes, it was.

Q: They always catch you.

KEENE: They catch you, no matter how hard you try. Yes, in '75 we came back, and I went to work for PM.

Q: Political-Military.

KEENE: Yes.

Q: What were you doing there?

KEENE: I was in an office called Security Assistance and Sales, and it was basically what it said—arms sales and military assistance and military training assistance. I got the Middle East as my portfolio to start.

Q: Almost everything we had in the Middle East was already pledged, wasn't it?

KEENE: Well, it was massive.

Q: It was huge going to Egypt and particularly to Israel, wasn't it?

KEENE: Well, at that time Egypt was in our sights, but we hadn't really started yet until after Camp David (site of peace talks and agreement).

Q: Oh, that's right.

KEENE: The biggest program in '75 was Iran—the Shah, followed by Saudi Arabia, and Israel, of course.

Q: Iran was later—our vast investment in promoting military sales and having Bell helicopter in other places working in Iran, we had such a huge American presence, that this is considered to be one of the causes of the sort of Islamic fundamental revolt, and there was, as I recall, quite a bit of concern of people saying, "What are we doing sending all of this stuff to Iran?" I mean, were you feeling that?

KEENE: Yes, definitely. There was a concern. There was an awful lot of money involved, so a lot of company pressures on the one hand. The Pentagon had some concerns of their own, but they also liked to sell that stuff because it kept their costs down. Congress was playing a bigger and bigger role; they were worried about it. It was a major issue at the time. Lots of decision memos went up to the secretary and beyond. Actually, in the office at that time, there was so much going to Iran, that there were two other guys working on parts of the Middle East—one did nothing but Iran. But as these guys' tours came to an end, I got their portfolios too. I eventually, after about six months or so, had it all. It was a very busy job; I liked it. It involved a lot of interagency stuff—contact with DOD (Department of Defense), NSC (National Security Council).

Q: How would you put the role of PM in all of this pressure, and all that? Were we a brake, a facilitator? Was the Department of Defense, pushing hard?

KEENE: Well, we tried to play the honest broker role. If we felt it was helpful and notdestabilizing, we might attempt to facilitate it, but there were a lot of times when we did raise serious concerns about the balance of power and effect of the American presence, whatever the issue-inappropriateness of the weapons system. We had several fights like that, because Kissinger would bargain away anything for a little diplomatic advantage. I remember he tried to sell Pershing missiles to Israel, for example. Also, fuel-air explosives; that was another controversial one.

Q: Did you get involved in the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System)?

KEENE: Yes. Sure did.

Q: I interviewed Senator Percy, who shot down in flames over AWACS. What were you doing with AWACS?

KEENE: Well, it was a major weapons sales, so the office was involved in it intimately from the beginning—as with that whole Middle East aircraft package, which was also very controversial: F-15s to Saudi Arabia, which came at a slightly different time. We tended to think AWACS to Saudi Arabia was all right, that in their hands, it would be more of a command and control system than any real threat to—it's all about the threat to Israel. That's what all this stuff is always about. So maybe we didn't care as passionately as some of the regional bureaus did; they were more affected by “clientitis” as they were and tried to be more objective.

Q: Who was the head of PM at the time?

KEENE: Well, I went through a couple of them: George Vest and Leslie Gelb and then Reggie Bartholomew.

Q: Was Jordan a factor at that time?

KEENE: Yes, there was a big controversial sale of I-Hawk anti-aircraft missiles, which just attracted unfavorable views in congress, and they finally compromised. The I-Hawk is inherently mobile, but they made the Jordanians emplace them in a fixed position. That's how that one was resolved. And the Jordanians wanted aircraft, too, but we didn't want to face that battle on the hill (Capitol Hill, i.e. congress).

Q: Did you have a relationship with the manufacturers?

KEENE: Yes, the office also reviewed commercial applications for export of international traffic of arms regulations; and so we would review all of their applications and make our recommendations back to the office of munitions control, which actually issued the licenses, or refused, whatever the case may be. So the guys from the companies would come in and state their case, frequently.

Q: It must have been a high pressure job.

KEEN: Yes, it was. There was a lot of those “secretary's got to have the memo tonight” sort of things. Staying late and working into the night. But I found the work very interesting, so it wasn't that burdensome.

Q: Did you get any feeling that the Israeli lobby was sort of monitoring everything that was doing, and ready to veto.

KEENE: Oh yes. They were very effective—very well organized and very well informed, and just very effective. They had a lot of influence, particular on Capitol Hill, so it's always a factor.

Q: How about Libya?

KEENE: Yes, I think nothing at the time was going to Libya. That was, I think, after they'd kicked us out of the—what was it, ...

Q: As far as I know—I haven't been following this for awhile, but it seems like there are something like twenty C-130s or something that have been sitting on the ground waiting to go to Libya for about 30 years.

KEENE: I think that's true.

Q: I hope we've pushed them off on somebody else.

KEENE: They are probably obsolescent by now. I think they were C-130As, and we're up to J or K by now. Yes, I remember that, now that you mention it.

Q: Well, the Egyptians weren't getting anything.

KEENE: Not at that time. They had started to throw the Soviets out, and I think we did start a small IMET military training program (International Military Education and Training); but they weren't getting any hardware.

Q: Were you sort of—your office, acting between, well some of the geographic—well, the Near Eastern bureau—were they pushing to get stuff in or pushing to get stuff off.

KEENE: Mostly to get it in. On the other hand, you have ACDA.

Q: The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, saying no.

KEENE: Saying “no” a lot and. And they had fairly recently set up the office of undersecretary for security assistance so he got involved, and his office.

Q: Who was that?

KEENE: It wasn't the original one who was named Tarr, hence the T symbol for this office. The one I worked with the most was Lucy Wilson Benson, a Carter political appointee. But there was another one in there, too.

Q: Where was she coming down most of the time?

KEENE: Well, she was not real well informed, but well intentioned and could be educated. And after a while she got more and more liberal—that is, liberal in her view that more and more of these sales seem to get to be acceptable to her than when she began. I'm trying to think of the other one.

I also want to mention our involvement in the North YemeSouth Yemen civil war. We were very involved in formulating the weapons transfers that took place, briefing the President on where we were and coordinating weapons sales and military flights of materials to Yemen. This conflict is not well remembered but at the time it was seen as important in the Cold War context. Aden being a Soviet client state and the North as our ally. We put in a staggering amount of effort into that.

Things had been developing at a rapid pace for two or three weeks before the 7th floor took much notice and Under Secretary Newsom called a meeting. Informed we had already sent TOW anti-armor missiles to Yemen, he wanted to know who had approved that. I had to say I had. I was an FSO-3 at the time. I thought I'd be in deep soup, but he let it go.

Q: You left there when?

KEENE: '80.

Q: But you were there during the Camp David business; that must have sort of opened up the gates.

KEENE: It did, and we sent a mission to Egypt. I went on it, and developed with them a list of what we thought we could get away with at the time. We went during Ramadan, and it was finalized over an Iftar dinner, and it became known as the Iftar list, and it was the start of a really big supply of military equipment to Egypt and a switch away from the Soviet

Union. Of course, we had to pay for most of it; they didn't have any money. Of course we also started a large AID program with them which continues to this day.

Q: When we sell a country a system like the F-16 or something, it's a huge operation—just not the plans, but it's the warehousing...if nothing else, the accounting. It's no longer somebody that sits and reaches into a bin a pulls out a part; I mean, it's all computerized.

KEENE: Yes, it is. Well, one of the mistakes we made, I think, it the first thing we sold them was an F-4, which turns out to be an incredibly difficult airplane to maintain.

Q: It is? I didn't realize that.

KEENE: Yes, I didn't either.

Q: The F-4 is the phantom?

KEENE: And before we got to the 16s, that was the first one we sent them. Boy, a big maintenance facility had to be set up, and a lot of technicians had to go out there and train them. It turned out to be a very difficult undertaking.

Q: Well then, in '80, where did you go? You didn't belong to anybody.

KEENE: No, I didn't. I went to Cairo—the first pol-mil (political-military) officer in the embassy.

Q: Actually, in many ways that put you into something you knew something about by this time.

KEENE: Yes. And they were gearing up, and there was a large and growing American presence under the auspices of the Office of Military Cooperation, led by a two-star Air Force general.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you went out?

KEENE: Roy Atherton.

Q: What was your job?

KEENE: I had to make it up. I started going to the OMC meetings every morning and getting to know those guys pretty well and started talking to them about political factors that needs to be considered and this and that and the other thing. I think pretty soon I because sort of the liaison from the ambassador to the military there. And besides the OMC, we had a fairly large defense attach# office, and we had a naval-medical research unit (NAMRU), and pretty soon we had unacknowledged bases in the desert—a pretty big program.

Q: What was your impression of the Egyptian military and their ability to absorb this quantify of sophisticated equipment?

KEENE: Well, they had a problem. Some of the leadership was very impressive, actually—well, trained, Sandhurst (British military school). We started training them in our command schools. But the rank and file was another story; it tended to be maybe illiterates from the farm. There were problems.

Q: I remember reading an article by an American military man who was saying there was a real disconnect between our training procedure and you might say the Egyptian, but oh! The Arab one where for the Arab, knowledge is power. And so if you trained a captain on something, he wasn't going to pass much down to his men, where as in our business you pass it down, you get it down to the sergeants and corporals very quickly, and there wasn't much of that. This is how the captain maintains power within the system. Did you find that?

KEENE: Yes. It was very hierarchical, it really was. They had generals doing stuff that we'd have sergeants doing...made for a lot of generals.

Q: Was that in a way your problem.

KEENE: Well, a little, but not so much. It was more the problem of the guys training them, the hands-on technicians, the aircraft mechanics. They had to deal with that at a much more intense pace than we did; I mean, we obviously wanted the program to succeed. Then we started joint exercises with them, and we just had a lot of activity—lot of stuff going on. Other issues: we were tying to get our nuclear-powered warships through the Suez Canal; that one dragged on for years and years.

Q: Well, what was the situation? Did we put them through?

KEENE: When I was there, they let us do one, once.

Q: Which warship was that?

KEENE: I forget. As a symbolic thing. But at the time I left, they were still fighting it. I think a few go through now. It really was a major military relationship.

Q: Was the feeling that this is a major military relationship to build up the military, was this just a pay-off to keep the Egyptians from doing anything.

KEENE: Yes, basically. Well, I suppose a little more complex than that. They are a leader of both the Arab world and in some respects the African Union, and they play a regional role bigger than many of the other countries. And they've done some peacekeeping, so they can use some of that stuff in that way. But what you say is also true—buying them off.

Q: Did you get any visits or connections with the Israeli side of things?

KEENE: Not so much. We had the MFO in the Sinai—Multinational Force and Observers—and we had—the Israeli Embassy opened while I was there, so we could interact a little bit with them, and Israeli officials started visiting. There wasn't a flood of them.

Q: Did you have much connection with the Egyptians, per se?

KEENE: Oh yes, quite a bit. You had your official relations, where you'd go over to the foreign ministry or the ministry of defense, and I would be doing that almost every day. We had people in the office of the minister; we had people that we knew in the office of—I guess his title was National Security Advisor—Osama Al-Baz, he was sort of Mubarak's right hand man on current issues. Yes, quite a bit. And then we just had some social friends. Some of them later got arrested, and became prominent!

Q: While you were doing that, were you going to be a political-military officer and had moved out of the consular cone, did you think?

KEENE: Yes, at some point I did succeed in moving into the political cone; I think it was while I was in PM in Washington—'78, or something.

Q: Well then, what were they going to do with you?

KEENE: Well, I didn't know, but I liked political-military work and I would have been happy to continue doing it. And in some ways I did, without the title. Later on.

Q: . Could you talk about the assassination of Anwar Sadat? Where you were at the time and how that devolved?

KEENE: Yes. I was in the stands at the military parade on October 10, and that was the first year that significant amounts of American military equipment were provided. I was the political-military officer, so it seemed like a good idea to go to the parade. So we witnessed the attack and the assassination. My wife and son were with me.

Q: Had there been any warning of this before—I mean in the embassy did you know there was a basic problem with, I guess they were fundamentalists, or Islamists?

KEENE: We knew that there was a significant amount of corruption in the Sadat regime, and we knew that he wasn't as popular in Egypt as he was in the west; and we did know that there were the beginnings, we thought, of the growth of fundamentalism. A lot of it in some of the provincial towns, like Asyut, for example, which was quite a poor city, and probably knew less about it in Cairo itself than we later came to discover.

Q: How far were you away from the action?

KEENE: Not that far.

Q: What did you think when all of a sudden these guys started piling out of trucks?

KEENE: It was not the first time that a vehicle had pulled over in that parade; they never did preventive maintenance at all in Egypt, so we didn't too much of it at first, except that maybe the truck was broken down. Also, at that instant, they had a flyover by some Mirage jets, so most people were looking up in the sky instead of at the truck. And then of course you heard the sounds of the firing. They threw some grenades too—there was a fair amount of noise. They sprayed the crowd as well as the front row of dignitaries, I guess to keep people down. In spite of all the security that was there, I only saw one guy firing back. They pretty much hit every other person in the front row. I know the chief of staff of the army was hit in the face with a grenade that didn't go off, so he was a fortunate survivor. Mubarak pretty much escaped—he just had a little nick.

Q: Was he next to Sadat?

KEENE: He was. It was really like every guy. I don't know how they managed to do that—maybe just the way that the rifles fired. Sadat himself was hit, according to some reports later, forty odd times. No question he was dead; I saw what turned out to be his body being removed and taken out of there in an ambulance. And then the embassy called several of us in, trying to figure out how to deal with this situation, and while we were there the ambassador, Roy Atherton, got a call from the Minister of Defense, Abu Gazallah, who

just lied to him...just said that Sadat was okay and would survive. I had seen him carried out and didn't believe that at all and soon the truth came out.

Q: Yes, I remember that report. I was at the State Department.

KEENE: That was pretty—the thing is, he was right next to him, too. He knew much better than that. It was purposeful deception, I'm sure.

Q: Well then, what did you all do? I mean, how did the embassy respond; what was sort of the immediate thinking about what does this mean?

KEENE: Well, exactly. Of course we weren't sure how deep-seated a conspiracy this was. But the streets were fairly calm. People weren't all that saddened. No widespread disturbances broke out; there were a few minor incidents in some of the provincial towns. We knew the constitution; we knew that if there was no uprising or anything further that Mubarak would become president, as he did. We ordered all the appropriate security measures of course—stay home, don't go out in the streets. I guess we closed embassy operations for a few days; I don't remember precisely how long.

Q: Was there a sort of re-looking at the file on Mubarak at the time?

KEENE: Yes, because he wasn't really that highly regarded as a—he'd been head of the air force, but—and he sat in on a lot of meetings with Sadat, but more...I mean, he never expressed independent ideas or thoughts. He just sort of went along with whatever Sadat said, at least publicly.

Q: In a way that was sort of how Sadat was seen, wasn't it, until he came to the fore?

KEENE: I guess there's some truth to that, yes.

Q: Maybe that's the Egyptian method of keeping one's head.

KEENE: I imagine it is, and he's been there a long time now. We never expected that.

Q: Well then, we're back to what—'94?

KEENE: That was...no, '83.

Q: '83—that's when the attack was, but I'm talking about where we were on the tape.

KEENE: Oh, yes, we are. I wanted to say—just to finish that, briefly. One of the first thing we had to do was to get ready for the incredibly huge delegation that came to his funeral, which consisted, I think, of four former presidents, half—that's not true—it seemed like half the senate and a third of the congress. And Begin came too, and it was on the Sabbath, so he had to walk—he couldn't drive, so security for that was enormous. So our delegation walked behind too. Lots of security for that. They couldn't go out to eat, so we had to have a dinner at the hotel where they stayed in Heliopolis. I do remember Nixon getting drunk and making a lot of sort of overly praising the job of the Foreign Service and all that we did. It was a lot of work; I was in charge of the control room.

Q: What were you doing?

KEENE: I was the control room officer...huge delegation.

Q: What did the control room officer do?

KEENE: Well, he had to set up the room and provide information, referrals for medical care, drinks, accommodation exchange—anything they wanted, we had to sort of do. And there were a lot of them—that was one of the bigger delegations.

Q: You were in Cairo from when?

KEENE: I was in Cairo from 1980 until 1983. And I went to Jerusalem: deputy principal officer. I got very involved in the Palestinian issue.

Q: The principal officer, consul general in Jerusalem is always a very tricky position, and how did you get that?

KEENE: I was deputy principal officer. How did I get it? I'm not quite sure; I was chosen, I think, by the to-be-new consul general, Wat Cluverius.

Q: This is Wat Cluverius IV.

KEENE: Yes. When I got there, Brandon Grove was still finishing up his term as consul general. After Wat took up the job of coordinator he moved to Tel Aviv and I was acting principal officer for about 10 months. At the end of my tour Morrie Draper took over.

Q: All right. Now you were there in 1983. How would you describe the situation in Jerusalem in 1983, when you got there?

KEENE: A consulate that was very heavily focused on supporting the Habib mission, on trying to deal with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. That was Habib-Draper.

Q: That was Morris Draper and Philip Habib. Morris Draper...

KEENE: Who visited frequently, going shuttling around the area, trying to work out a deal after Sabra and Shatila to get the Israelis out of Beirut. And because the UN also had their regional headquarters at Government House in Jerusalem, and the involvement of UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) and UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization), and various other organizations, as well as the Israeli government—they came to Jerusalem very frequently.

Q: How would you describe sort of the attitude of the officers—American officers—you were dealing with about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon?

KEENE: Well, I remember one of them saying something to the effect that this was different from the Palestinians: the Lebanese shot back, and that sort of stunned the

Israelis, because it really wasn't the Lebanese government—it was various factions, like Hezbollah....and the Palestinians. They were there too. I think by and large everybody saw it—and certainly after the Sabra and Shatila massacres—as orchestrated as much by Sharon as anybody else, and they certainly had no enthusiasm for the Israeli invasion.

Q: Well, what was happening in the Con Gen Jerusalem's area responsibility—was it eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank?

KEENE: It was actually all of Jerusalem, which gave us an opportunity to enjoy a bit of a window into Israeli thinking as well as Palestinian: and that was one of the really great things about being there. It was sort of two for the price of one. Many days you could have lunch with an Israeli official and dinner with a Palestinian—the only place, really, where you could get both sides, and it was endlessly complex and fascinating.

Q: You were there from '83 until when?

KEENE: '86.

Q: What were the Palestinians—You didn't have Gaza, or did you?

KEENE: No, we didn't have Gaza. That was covered out of Tel Aviv, although we went down there frequently, because there were just natural connections.

Q: What were the Palestinians doing during this period of time? I mean looking back—a rather quiet time?

KEENE: Yes, in retrospect, yes. After the deal was struck to get the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) out of Lebanon, the focus shifted more to trying to restart the peace process. At that time, it sort of fell to the assistant secretary, Dick Murphy, to take the lead in that effort, so we did a lot of work on that, too. That actually became our focus

—trying to understand what was going on in the West Bank and what it might take to promote some sort of progress in the peace process.

Q: This is the period of time when you couldn't talk to the PLO?

KEENE: That's right. And the Israelis—official Israel—wouldn't talk to us either. We were officially confined to the protocol and consular sections of the Foreign Ministry. But in practice, there were quite a few contacts, socially.

Q: Was the mayor—Teddy

KEENE: Teddy Kollek, yes. We had contacts with the municipality. Teddy had a foreign policy advisor, an Arab affairs adviser, and a religious adviser, all became good friends.

Q: Kollek. He was the mayor at the time. He just died, just a few weeks ago. How was he viewed?

KEENE: Very favorably. He understood the situation and was tolerant, tried to promote the Arab sector as well as the Israeli sector. He tried to promote peace and harmony. He had an advisor for foreign affairs from the foreign ministry who sort of was our liaison point within the mayor's office, and he also had an advisor on Arab affairs and we dealt with him too. Teddy was a good guy; he liked a good cigar and a glass of scotch, and he was accessible.

Q: Right now—looking at The Washington Post yesterday, they had a long article about how the Israelis are gobbling pieces of Arab Jerusalem. What was the situation, let's say first in Jerusalem; were the Israelis being aggressive to grab things, were there settlement groups?

KEENE: This is the same old story that's been going on since '67, really. In those days, they were focusing more on building pretty major settlements surrounding Jerusalem, including what we would have called the West Bank, so as to make it very difficult to re-

divide the city. And they were controlling—putting major settlements on the major roads and lines of communication. Building new roads. The same group that you read about in the Post the other day, the Ateret Cohanim, were active then, and they'd started that then—buying a few properties in the Old City (of Jerusalem) and occupying them.

Q: Well, what happened? At that time, were we calling the settlements illegal settlements?

KEENE: At that time we were, yes.

Q: So essentially, these were settlements in the Arab territory, is that right?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: Therefore they fell under your jurisdiction?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: Could you do anything with them? Did you go there?

KEENE: Oh yes, we did. In fact, we started that; the consulate hadn't done that previously. We started visiting settlements and trying to get to know the leadership of the settlement movement.

Q: What was your impression of the settlements at that time?

KEENE: Well, there really were two types: there were those that were ideologically motivated, hard line, right wingers, many of them American citizens; and then there were those who were attracted by the subsidized housing that made it cheaper than settling in Israel proper, and those settlers just sort of used them as a convenient place to live—bedroom communities, if you will.

Q: How about the American hard-liners? I speak as an old consular officer. People who fly flags of convenience overseas—these are generally people whose allegiance is with

the country where they are located—they may be immigrants or not immigrants, but are people...they enjoy all the rights of being citizens of the host country until things get tough, and all of a sudden, they're Americans. Did you find that flag of convenience type thing?

KEENE: Yes, there was a lot of that, and a lot of dual nationals, and whatever worked that particular day...Almost everybody would keep their American citizenship—I think as a safety net if things really went south, they'd have a place to go. It was a funny kind of place. We did have the great pleasure of carrying out the Department's decision to lift the citizenship of Meir Kahane while we were there.

Q: He was the head of the Jewish Defense League

KEENE: Yes, among other kinds of...

Q: A very aggressive American-Jewish activist attacking the soviets, and all that.

KEENE: And always attacking the Arabs, too. That was the day of the Jewish Underground, when there were secret violent groups...very right-wing Israelis who were doing things such as putting anti-tank rockets into the side of civilian buses and bombs in the cars of the Arab mayors. They were terrorist groups, really.

Q: They killed...they blew the legs off some of those Arab mayors.

KEENE: Yes, they did.

Q: It's so difficult to lose his citizenship. How did they take away his citizenship?

KEENE: He became a member of the Knesset. You're not supposed to hold foreign office. That's how they got him. I know the minister of defense was an American citizen also, but when he became minister, he voluntarily surrendered his passport. There was a lot of that.

Q: What was the attitude of the Arab leadership? Did they treat you as a last hope or did they treat you as just a bunch of stooges of the Israelis, or what?

KEENE: I think they were ambivalent. They resented the American role, but what they tried to do, I guess, was to convince us of the righteousness of their cause, so that they might turn American policy around a little bit. It was just a place on both the Israeli and Palestinian side where people lived and breathed politics. And they both loved to talk, so you had no real troubles making contacts, getting information. You really got around and knew a lot of people.

Q: Did you go all over the West Bank?

KEENE: Yes, all over. Everyday.

Q: How did the Israeli occupying force treat you?

KEENE: It wasn't too bad. We weren't supposed to have too much contact with them, but occasionally we could make a few contacts inside what they called the civil administration, which was mostly the military administration. We were allowed to talk to some contacts who dealt with refugee affairs, the head of UNRWA (UN Relief and Workers Administration) we could deal with; we had some secret meetings with the head of the civil administration, and tried to do what we could to help out with individual issues and just broader issues of the way the military occupation acted. There were a lot of arbitrary arrests, lots of stories about mistreatment of prisoners, many of whom were Arab-American citizens, so we had the consular function on that side of the issue, too. We went into the jails, visiting these people, doing what we could. We were also allowed contact with Israeli MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) consular officials, religious ministry officials and informal contact with many others.

Q: What was your impression, and of the officers at the consulate general, of how Arab-Americans who were arrested were treated?

KEENE: By and large, they were not treated well. They were sometimes physically abused. There were actually quite a large number of them throughout the West Bank, and a lot of them ended up running afoul of the occupation, one way or another. There were actually whole villages which were almost all American citizens in it. We'd go visit them sometimes, and they'd be out there playing baseball. It was a surreal scene.

Q: You can understand Jewish-Americans who go to Israel for Zionist causes, but why would Arab-Americans go back to Palestine?

KEENE: Some because it was a lot easier to live on your social security check there than in the States, some for family reasons, but overall it was more emigration than there were people coming back. That was particularly true of the Christian Palestinians, whose numbers continue to this day to fall kind of dramatically. There aren't too many of them left.

Q: How did you find, let's say, Arab-Americans who ran afoul of Israelis? I assume you made representation to Israeli authorities. In general, how did this work?

KEENE: Well, we could do it several different ways. Officially, it should have been to the consular department of the Foreign Ministry. It also happened during visits to jails. Raising our concerns also occurred during our more informal contacts with higher level officials.

Q: Did you find them responsive?

KEENE: Not very. We also had a channel through the embassy, the ambassador sometimes....

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KEENE: At first, Sam Lewis, and then Tom Pickering.

Q: How were the relations with the embassy?

KEENE: When I got there, they were pretty lousy...a lot of mutual suspicion, and, you know, clashing cables and things like that, but they improved. We had set up a system where we went to their country team meeting every week, and we had a couple of people designated as liaison It got pretty good. I mean we were never going to see things perfectly eye-to-eye, but it wasn't bad.

Q: Well, did you find that particular junior officers who were assigned to Jerusalem, would take up, you might say, the cause of—because they were the ones who had seen the mistreated Palestinians and others—taking up the cause of the Palestinians, and in doing so became critical of the Israelis. Was this a problem for you?

KEENE: It could be, and in some cases...we did strive for a balance, and certainly it was easy to not like what you saw going on. But we had some very good junior officers. We had an AID program too, and one of them usually was designated as the point of contact for that. That was run through grants to NGO's (non-governmental organizations)—grants to NGO's. One of them who worked with me on this was a young Nick Burns.

Q: Undersecretary for Political Affairs. Number three in the State Department.

KEENE: Right.

Q: Within the, you might say, Israeli organizations, was there any particular group within this that you had to deal with that was particularly hostile, or was it just plain a mixed bag?

KEENE: There were definitely very right-wing groups that were very hostile. Not so much in the government, although certainly that strain of thought was present in the Likud and

some of the other far right Israeli parties. And that was the time when Begin and then Shamir, the Likud was in power. It was hard to get much out of them.

Q: How about the Israeli religious community—I think about the Orthodox. Were they sort of off to one side of everything, or were they...how did you find them?

KEENE: Well, you had the ultra-orthodox, the Hassidics, that's one group; and then you have just sort of the right-wing orthodox, and shades in between to pretty totally secular. That's a big thing in Israeli society and remains so today; there are real splits between the very right-wing religious and the more secular westernized segment of society. It was kind of a...a lot of the real right-wingers—you might get to talk to them, but they didn't want to have a lot to do with you. We knew a lot of Israelis; we'd go to their homes for social affairs. You could talk to a pretty broad spectrum of people. And they have a lot of organizations, too...you had this group or that group that you go call on and talk to. We got to know a lot of former officials who were in academia who really knew—well-connected people—former generals, this, that and the other thing. We'd be up at Hebrew University all the time, talking with them, too. We got around.

Q: How did you find Hebrew University? Were they trying to work as a bridge with the Arab population, or were they really representative of the sort of straight Jewish side?

KEENE: No, I think that they were...Well, there were people up there that ran the spectrum, too, but on balance, I thought it was a pretty impressive organization. They had a lot of very impressive people working there who did try to understand what was going on in the Arab sector and in the Arab world. Some of them knew a great deal and were pretty well connected.

Q: Well, right now when we've over time seen places that can really start clashes in the various holy sites, particularly Muslim holy sites. During your time were there any particular problems there?

KEENE: Oh, yes. We had a big issue over the so-called Hasmonean tunnel, Israeli archeological digs near the Western Wall that provoked protests.

Q: What was that?

KEENE: It was an ancient tunnel they were trying to excavate, but it was right next to the wall, to the Haram Es-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary, and suspicions always run high when the Israelis do that that they're trying to make a territorial grab in what has been an area that Palestinians consider administered by the waqf, for the trust, the Islamic trust. So that went on for a long time, and we had stuff like that happen all the time—occasional riots after Friday prayers, occasional shutdowns of the Temple Mount. Always an issue, but that was typical of the whole area and wasn't just an Israeli-Arab thing; you also had all the Christian groups fighting among themselves over control of the various parts of the various holy places. It was a unique place, and you just really had to well...you got interested in it—not everybody would be, I guess, but you can get into the differences between the Greek Orthodox and the Russian Orthodox and the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox—all of those groups and their interaction. One that was very interesting was we had the white Russians and the red Russians, and Russia had no representation at that time, so they used the church members as their unofficial channel. So, it was interesting.

Q: First, let's talk about the American tourist, the strange sort of Christian tourist. Were they a problem or not?

KEENE: Generally not. I mean you're always going to have the stray citizen who gets in some kind of trouble, and you have to try to help them out—citizen services and things like that. But a lot of the Christian groups would come in fairly large, organized tour groups. They'd get on their bus and go around; we had a lot of Jewish-American groups came too, as tourists, or as part of their American-Jewish Congress sponsorship or something like that. They were generally not much trouble either. That wasn't a big issue. Well, you had

the guy who thought he was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ; he'd get himself eventually in trouble. You know, the people who have psychiatric problems.

Q: Well, I went to the archives and did athis was back in '84, so I was in the historian's office the year before I retired, and I did a paper on our consul in Jerusalem in the 1870s. The American Colony, for example, one of the cults at the time, where the leader of the Americans there...I can't think of his name—the family's still around, but he and the senior members—male members—absorbed the wives of some of the other members. I mean, there was a lot of that sort of hanky-panky going on, which often happens in cults. And then, again, we had one guy—he was earlier, who arrived, declared he was the consul, American consul, had never been approved, and then eventually converted to Judaism and disappeared into the woodwork. But the Turks accepted him as the American consul for awhile.

As a consular officer, how did you treat...I arrive in Jerusalem and decide I'm Jesus, and am wandering around declaring this and maybe putting out robes, or something

KEENE: We had a few.

Q: How did you deal with it?

KEENE: Well, it's pretty hard to deal with them until their actions become so bizarre that they trigger a reaction by the host government. Sometimes they'd go violent. I mean, they're just troubled people. If they got into some trouble, you tried to get them some help...either from their family or if they needed psychiatric help or repatriation...every situation on its own merits, I guess. We had a few.

Q: How about Congressional delegations; you must have been deluged with them.

KEENE: Absolutely. I think I had a count at one point. When I was there I think I met over 400 members one way or another.

Q: You know, this is such a political almost third rail, that I would think that ...I mean, every time that there is a presidential primary in New York state, all the candidates support moving our embassy to Jerusalem. Although we all know this is sort of a charade, I would think with politicians you couldn't talk about that.

KEENE: Well, some politicians know that, and some don't. It depends. It was usually a little different there, because we would usually split these CODELs with the embassy in Tel Aviv. They'd take them to go see the prime minister or whoever and then some of them wanted to come and talk to a few members of the Palestinian leadership and see how things were. And some of them did it but weren't too interested in spending a lot of time doing it. So we would maybe get them only for a day, and we'd host a lunch or a dinner or take them around the West Bank to call on some of the mayors or tailor a program to what they were interested in. There were a lot of them.

Q: How did you find life there?

KEENE: I loved it. It was fascinating. It was before the intifada (Palestinian uprising); I didn't feel a lot of danger. I never knew, but we used to say they hated each other so much they'd sort of ignore us. That turned out to be pretty much true until later on.

Q: What about immigration: were you running a fairly large visa program?

KEENE: Yes, pretty large. We had two different buildings in those days—one in the west side and one in the east, and the consular section was in the east. We had lovely buildings—old, beautiful, historic landmark-type buildings. A lot of the Israelis didn't like that because they had to go to east Jerusalem to get their consular services. But it really wasn't deep into East Jerusalem; it's not very far from the American Colony, which in those days, at least, was one of the very few sort of neutral meeting places where both sides didn't mind going at the same time. So we could have stuff there and get away with promoting dialogue a little bit.

Q: Was there a fairly active USIA (United States Information Agency) program there?

KEENE: Yes—modest, but yes. We only had a single American officer.

Q: Who was that?

KEENE: Well, Bill Cavness at first and then his successor, David Good. But that was curious, too, because the embassy also had an office in Jerusalem, staffed by another USIA officer Arthur Green. So, you had that coordination problem that you had to work out, too.

Q: Well, did you feel that you spent an awful lot of the time vetting anything that anybody...every piece of paper that you put out, or letters, or announcements, or anything else, to make sure that you weren't setting off vibrations that would come back and haunt you by showing that you were either too pro-Arab or too pro-Israeli?

KEENE: Oh, yes, for sure. It got to be second nature after a while to find out where all the land mines are. But that was part of the fun...and all the diversity and different views and trying. I mean we consciously set out to try to improve relations with the embassy and the Jewish community and the Jewish-American organizations, and the consulate was generally hated by them and mostly “biased” and “anti-Israeli.”

Q: Did you have problems of your officers being accused by newspapers in the halls of Congress as being pro-Arab and anti-Israeli?

KEENE: Yes, it happened. It wasn't too bad then. We got to work with the Arab-American groups, proactively helping them schedule appointments with our CODELs and things like that. Socializing with them, getting to know them. We got to know a lot of the Israeli press, too. That helped.

Q: How'd you find the press?

KEENE: Well, they have a right-wing press, but they have a lot of people who are pretty good.

Q: The Jerusalem Post. How is that?

KEENE: In those days it was liberal. Now it's right-wing. They had good, solid, English-speaking reporters—it was an English-language paper, and we got to know them well. That helped. They'd come to our receptions.

Q: How about the Hassidic community? They have big enclaves in New York...they used to have up in New Hampshire, too. They're a group apart.

KEENE: They're a group apart. There's a very big area in Jerusalem that's Hassidic, Mea Shearim. They are ultra-orthodox: no driving cars on Saturday, or anything like that, so if you tried to drive through that area, they'd throw stones at you. There were riots sometimes. There are some 90 separate Hassidic groups, and it's very hard to figure out all of them.

Q: Such as Lubavitcher. They consider that the messiah hasn't come yet and therefore the whole Zionist cause is a fraud.

KEENE: Yes. And there's another even more screwy group, Neturei Karta, who believe that the state of Israel is illegitimate, and they support the PLO. Really! When the PLO went to Madrid two or three Israelis of this sect went with them. And the leader of that group's an American, so he would bug us all the time. He was quite a character. He knew he was running a fraudulent operation, but...

Q: Did you feel under any particular threat, you or the consulate of bombing and other things like that?

KEENE: You know, not particularly. We had bomb threats and we had—that was the era when we were starting to tighten up on security and we had a major security upgrade program which caused us some little concern, because we were in an historic building and had to preserve that under Israeli law and we didn't want to put ugly concrete barriers on the sidewalk out front. Kollek didn't want them either, so we had to do some nice planters out there. But I didn't really—I mean we tried to be prudent, but it wasn't something that kept me up at night, no. We felt we had a pretty good network and knew a lot about what was going on. There was violence. I know one of my very good contacts was the mayor of Nablus, and he was assassinated by the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) while I was there.

Q: What was that group?

KEENE: Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It was one of the...they were splintered into five or six groups; that was one of the more radical ones. Anyway...and then we had the Jewish underground to worry about, and the mayors certainly did. There was violence, but it just didn't...we just didn't seem to be major targets.

Q: Well, you left there when?

KEENE: '86. I lived in east Jerusalem. Then we had people living in east Jerusalem; we had people living in Bethlehem.

Q: Where'd you live?

KEENE: In Lazaria, which in English is Bethany, Mount of Olives, near Lazarus' tomb.

Q: Who was the consul general after Cluverius?

KEENE: Well, we had...I started with Grove, then Cluverius, and then Draper.

Q: Oh it was Draper, yes. I've interviewed all three of those. Okay. Well, where'd you go in '86?

KEENE: Muscat.

Q: And you were in Muscat from when to when?

KEENE: '86-'89.

Q: What was Muscat like when you got there in '86?

KEENE: Disneyland. It was almost unreal—picturesque and well kept. It was a place where nothing ever went wrong. There was never a robbery or a traffic accident or any bad news ever heard of or reported.

Q: I've interviewed Walter Schwinn who was my consul general when I was in Dhahran—this goes back to the '50s. He negotiated the first updating of our 1930 treaty with Muscat. He talked about—I think there was one key to the gate, and you shuttered it at night and it was...

KEENE: Yes...

Q: First of all, what sort of government does Muscat have?

KEENE: There was a sultan; it's a monarchy. And it was the current sultan's father who locked the gate at night and who forbade, essentially, modernization. There was, like, one school, about two kilometers of paved road, one health facility. It was illegal to wear glasses, it was illegal to be out past the gate after dark, all kinds of amazing restrictions. They must have been living in the—I don't know—17th or 18th century. The current sultan overthrew his father and started a modernization process. Then they got a little oil money

and really rebuilt the place. Too much so, in the view of some, because they just ripped down the ancient walls and replaced them.

Our embassy was in a historic house, so it was right down near the palace, on the water, just about, and just a beautiful building—the ownership of one of the very, very wealthy families at that time, the Zawawis, one of whom was the minister of finance and one of whom was the advisor to the sultan. Some of the richest men in the world. Then we had another building right there, also in the compound, Beit Nassib. The British Embassy was next door—another nice old building. Then they decided they didn't want that so they were forcing diplomatic missions out into a new diplomatic area on the beach. And so there weren't very many left downtown...two or three when I got there. Then they wanted us to move, too, and that was fine, because FBO (Foreign Buildings Office) wanted to put one of those new, secure buildings there, so that went on when I was there, and we moved into it maybe six months before I left.

Q: Was there any sort of program going on in Muscat when you were there?

KEENE: The major issue of the day really was our response—well, two things: we sought access to facilities agreement with Oman, and we started an escort operation for oil tankers in the gulf, because the Iraq-Iran war was going on. The facilities thing really was sparked at the end of the Carter administration by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and we sought agreements with Oman and Somalia, Kenya and later on, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait. British influence was very strong still in Oman; it had been—well, legally, rather a strange situation. I don't think it was ever formally a protectorate, but it was all but run by the Brits for a while. Still a very strong influence—particularly strong in the military, navy.

One major fallout of the escort operation was the shooting down of an Iran air passenger jet by the USS Vincennes.

As part of the facilities agreement, we agreed to set up a small AID program and an International Military Education and Training (IMET) program and sell some military

equipment. That meant we had a facilities maintenance team, a defense attach# office, an office of military cooperation (OMC) and an AID mission. This in an embassy with one pol-econ officer plus a JO (junior officer), one part-time consular officer and a three person admin section (two of whom were JO's).

Q: Yes, the Trucial Oman Scouts were quite a ...

KEENE: There was Trucial Oman, too—well, all these little sheikdoms had tangled boundaries, and a lot of what was Trucial Oman is now UAE. Oman is actually split by part of the UAE. There's the bulk of Oman, then a strip of the UAE, then out at the Musandam, at the tip, of the peninsula Omani again. But at that time their navy and their air force were commanded by British officers. British officers served in the ranks in the army and played a very major role. So that was a little different. We're kind of used to being a preeminent power in many countries; we were definitely number two there.

Q: Again, when I was in Dhahran—we're talking about the late 1950s, the British troops were fighting in the Jabal al Akhdar, the Green Mountains. Was anything going on there?

KEENE: Well, that was the Dhofar Rebellion, yes. No, we could go to the Jabal; it was pacified; it was mountainous and that was quite beautiful. But there was still fallout from the Dhofar Rebellion. Dhofar was treated in an especially delicate way, and they made sure that there was balance in the cabinet and in the army, and the sultan had his winter palace in Salalah, the major port in Dhofar. So, it was treated with kid gloves.

Q: How about Yemen? I mean, there were two Yemens; this would be over to eastern Yemen?

KEENE: North and south. It was South Yemen. Aden.

Q: Aden was a rather virulent socialist thing; how were relations along the border when you were there?

KEENE: It's a very wild and difficult border—mountainous, very sparsely populated. There were border flare-ups from time to time. It caused the Omanis to build a very expensive road so that they could get into that area with their military and repel incursions, set up some border stations. So we did have incidents; we didn't have major outbreaks, though. A concern, but not a major, major issue.

Q: What was your job?

KEENE: I was DCM (deputy chief of mission).

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KEENE: Cranwell Montgomery, a political appointee. I was charg# for my final eight or nine months as his replacement, Dick Boehm, had to wait a long time to be confirmed.

Q: How did things work regarding getting facility rights there for stockpiling military equipment?

KEENE: Well, the negotiation was protracted, but finally agreed. That was led essentially out of Washington, out of PM (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Dept. of State). They got those agreements, and then—and there was lots and lots of haggling about every little step of implementation, particularly—most of the stuff was for the air force, and the head of the air force there was British—Air Vice Marshall Eric Bennett—he was a tough nut to deal with. He knew an awful lot, a very experienced guy who had done this sort of thing before, and he wanted to extract the maximum out of every issue. So, it took a long time, but eventually we ended up fulfilling the agreement, had an awful lot of stuff there, and then we had a group of people to maintain it. They were mostly contractors, but it meant a few extra air force officers on the staff. And as part of that deal, we agreed to provide them with a little military assistance, and a little bit of military training. They share the Straits of Hormuz. Historically—Oman has a very interesting history. Historically, they had occupied

the Iranian side of the strait, too, for several centuries. And Baluchistan, and what's now Pakistan, and they had a little empire.

Q: Down to Dar-es-Salaam, and Zanzibar.

KEENE: Which is another interesting. Anyway, now, of course, the balance of power has shifted, and they'd be happy to be our allies, but they never want to antagonize the Iranians while they're at it. So, their sensitivities were touched. But, eventually, didn't involve them too much directly. The Omani Foreign Minister was always asking us if he could carry some message for us to Tehran; we very rarely took him up on that. And later—or earlier—I forget the time, the ships escorting the tankers had had a run-in with some Iranian boats, and there had been an exchange of fire, and we'd captured a number of Iranian—I think they turned out to be Revolutionary Guard. We didn't really want to keep them, so we arranged an exchange, and that took place in Muscat. That was a big deal, too. We had to set all that up, and the International Committee of the Red Cross was involved, and Oman had to agree, and then they flew them in on a bunch of military helicopters and handed them over at the airport. Our military was—Oman was perfectly peaceful—but they were very nervous and high strung—weapons all over the place.

Q: Were there any Iranian revolutionary groups trying to stir things up in Oman?

KEENE: They had an embassy, and there was some intelligence from time to time, and there was a Shia community. There was some intelligence they were trying to gain some influence over that group. Nothing happened when I was there; later, I understand there were some religious demonstrations that did occur. Exactly why or how, or what was behind them, I don't know.

Q: Well, was the sultan making any move to bring about a better deal for Omani women or for democratization, or anything like that?

KEENE: Yes, but it was really glacial. He did set up a consultative council, at first appointed, later partially elected with so many seats set aside for women. That's it, as far as I can tell; don't get a lot of news about Oman in the paper, but I don't think it's progressed a lot.

Q: How are relations with the United Arab Emirates?

KEENE: Pretty good, as far as I understand. I know we have an element of CENTCOM (United States Central Command) that's there and some facilities there, and some communications gear and various other things. We used to go up there; that was about the only country you could get to from Oman, and it was just staggeringly modern and well developed.

Q: Did you drive?

KEENE: Yes. Of all things, there were international softball tournaments held up there; they were fun.

Q: Well, I take it that with modest oil wealth, there was no such thing as had happened with the Arab Emirates.

KEENE: No, they're more modest. I mean, it's not so bad; I think they're now close to 700,000 barrels a day, and for a country with a population of only a couple of million, it's adequate, and they've developed quite a bit. But it's not like the UAE, no.

Q: I take it this was not a place you got many tourists or congressional delegations, or that sort of thing?

KEENE: Actually, when we got there, there were no tourists, and they finally started to open it up, but on a selective basis. And they didn't want any young ones; they wanted older, organized groups. Now I understand that it's easier, because, I mean, there's a

constituency for tourism. There are a lot of pretty wealthy businessmen who want to fill their hotel rooms and things like that. And it's a beautiful country. I guess there is some tourism now, but we actually went from nothing; we saw the start of it, and it was very modest. We had some CODELs, but not many; those that did come were interested in the pre-positioning thing. Some people came. You know who came—Baker came, had a Secretary Baker visit in my last week or two on the job there. It turns out that the first President Bush had told him what a nice place it was for a rest stop, so he dropped in...dropped in to see it, but not too demanding in terms of visitors.

Q: Did you get any reflections about the Iran-Iraq war? Where stood Oman?

KEENE: As far away from having to take a formal position as they possibly could. They didn't want to get involved, which was smart, actually.

Q: Well, I assume you had something that passed for a political section?

KEENE: Yes, one guy.

Q: I was going to say, in a place like that there wasn't much political life, was there?

KEENE: No. It wasn't easy to get it. It was there; they were a bit afraid to talk too much. But, you keep working at it, you make some friends, you get around, you hear this, you hear that, somebody drinks too much.

Q: Was this a place where people spent their afternoons—the men with, what is it, ghat, or whatever it is?

KEENE: No, actually.

Q: I understand in Yemen.

KEENE: Yemen, yes, absolutely.

Q: Is it ghat, or what?

KEENE: I've heard many—khat...

Q: It's basically a type of hashish, isn't it...no, it's a stimulant.

KEENE: It's a mildly narcotic leaf. No, they didn't do that there. The government closed at 2:00; they went home and had a big lunch, and had a siesta.

Q: What did the better-off Omanis do?

KEENE: Well, a lot of them had farms in the country.

Q: The farms would just be a summer place?

KEENE: Yes, a place to get away. They would travel; a lot of them had a fair amount of money, and they would go to London. A surprising number of them had big houses in Washington, actually.

Q: What about the Omani women; did you get any feel for their role?

KEENE: This is where the history of an empire makes it interesting. When Tanzania became independent, you know Zanzibar joined Tanganyika. They pretty much expelled the Arab community, which was essentially Omanis, most of whom then returned to Oman, where most of them had never been. And they were speaking Swahili, and not Arabic. So you had an integration problem that goes on to this day. The other side of that coin is that they were generally much better educated, because remember, the old sultan didn't let anybody go to school. So, they got this literate cadre of people back, and to the resentment of many, because of their education, they landed government jobs. But the women there were not retiring; they were used to participating in commercial life, political life, and that's still true today, too. The Zanzibari women have formed the women's

organizations, the women's faculty at the university, run businesses, do this. The Omanis—indigenous Omanis—don't do much of that, so it's interesting.

Then, there are the Baluchis. They had been recruited for the army under the old sultan, and they came over from Baluchistan, of course, and many, many just settled there. Or they were given some land as a reward for their service, and—there's just a lot, so they're a distinct group, too, within the society.

Q: What did they pick, religious-wise, as a whole group, there in Oman?

KEENE: There's some Shia there, mostly from the sub-continent, originally. Oman's trading patterns were different than most of the Arab world; they traded with India, Iran...

Q: Following the trade winds.

KEENE: Yes, exactly, which you don't see in most of the Arab world. It snuck into their food, and there are people who may now have intermarried, but originated in India, or what is now Pakistan. They moved there, and they set up shop, so you have that small community. But the majority of Omanis are Ibadi—neither Shia nor Sunni. And it's a very tolerant branch of Islam, practiced only, I am told, in Oman, and for some reason, Tunisia. I don't know how that worked out. You don't get a lot of religious strife; you do get a little anti-Shia sentiment.

Q: This was during the period, I guess, when the Saudis were setting up the religious schools, the madrassas, which preached a form of rather intolerant Wahhabism; was that going on there?

KEENE: Not in Oman. No. I heard later that there were some arrests that took place—this was after I left—of people who were accused of being over-fanatic in their religious beliefs.

Q: Was there anything going on such as explorations—people like the National Geographic looking for lost cities and all of that? The area had been much more fertile at one time, hadn't it?

KEENE: Absolutely. It was on the old frankincense road. Yes, there were archeological sites that could be visited. Later they found more; a lot of those were in Dhofar. There were also a series of quite ancient inland forts that you could visit. And the area had been briefly colonized by the Portuguese. At the entrance to Muscat harbor, on each side is a massive Portuguese fort that is very picturesque, right downtown, where the palace is.

Q: Was there a place where up and coming Omanis went away to school; did they go away to Britain?

KEENE: Yes, mostly to London. We have some in the States, but mostly in London. There is a university there now; it was fairly new in those days: Sultan Qaboos University.

Q: How were relations with the British embassy?

KEENE: Good. We made it a point, recognizing their influence, to get along with them. There were those in the mission who resented the Brits, but I never thought that was going to get you anywhere.

Q: How about the Omani government—how was the foreign ministry, and was it an effective government?

KEENE: Yes, but...Well, I knew a lot of people in the foreign ministry, but there it was typical, I guess, of a new government, and it was really only the minister, and maybe the undersecretary, who was going to make any decision. So you had to get to know those people. It was all very well to know the head of the American section...And in a lot of those ministries, you'd walk in there, and people just reading the newspaper, drinking coffee.

Q: Did you feel much the heavy hand of the Arabian peninsular desk or the NEA (Near East and Africa) bureau?

KEENE: Arabian Peninsular Affairs. No, not too much; I don't think we were high on their list of priorities.

Q: I was going to say, I think they had other things to do. Did you get ship visits?

KEENE: Yes; after the escorts started, constantly.

Q: How did they work?

KEENE: They had a nice, modern port at Mutrah. We'd get the authority for it; they'd come in, tie up for a couple of days. The sailors would get leave, not that there was an awful lot for a sailor to do in Muscat.

Q: Well, could you sort of bus them off to a park, or the equivalent thereof?

KEENE: Yes. They'd set that up, out to see a fort or one of the old houses. There was a city that was only about an hour away called Nizwa, that had a fort and a souk, so that was good for visiting people. You could do that. The hotels actually were allowed to serve alcohol to foreigners, so it was liberal to that extent. And they'd re-provision there—one of the reasons they'd come in. Ironically, most of their vegetables were via Iran. So, we were in a position of buying Iranian goods while we were patrolling the gulf. No, we had a whole lot of ship visits.

Q: Did the name “al Qaeda” cross your desk at all?

KEENE: Never saw it, in those days, no.

Q: After this almost bucolic period or something, compared to what happens in the Middle East elsewhere, where did you go in '89?

KEENE: Back to Washington to become director of Arab Peninsular Affairs.

Q: You got there at a good time, didn't you?

KEENE: I got there at a really bad time.

Q: You were doing that from '89

KEENE: Yes, only for a year: '89-90, through the war.

Q: Just in time.

KEENE: Yes, I had just reported for duty about two weeks before the invasion.

Q: What were you picking up on this at that time? I mean, you're the brand new guy on the block, and all of a sudden there were noises that Saddam Hussein was stirring things up. What was the feeling you were getting from your people who'd been following this report?

KEENE: Well, there was a lot of uncertainty, and then we had the now infamous April Glaspie report of her meeting with Hussein, which made it look like maybe something could be worked out. I had reported directly to work, and I had put off my home leave; so right about then, I got two weeks off! And then the invasion took place while I was on vacation. It was a shock, really, and, you know, it was very intense. We really, really worked incredible hours as the buildup to our invasion took place. Very intense diplomatic effort worldwide to build the coalition, to get the UN resolutions approved, to get the money.

Q: Because there was such a concentration on that, did you have a particular piece of the action?

KEENE: Well, no, I guess I'd have to say. I was trying to run the office. I was doing the overall pieces, the memo for the Baker trips, the memo for the president's trips, the memo for the coalition trip and the “tin cup” tour.

Q: The “tin cup” tour, you were going around collecting money.

KEENE: Right. The secretary did a lot of that himself, and the undersecretary.

Q: What was your impression of the Saudi response?

KEENE: It was really pretty forthcoming, for them. They had always resisted too visible a presence on their soil: and they gave us pretty good access to their facilities, and let us stage things through there. I mean, particularly after they themselves were attacked, they were happy to. You remember briefly that incursion out of Kuwait? So, for them, they were quite forthcoming, I thought, because the Kuwaitis were totally desperate. We had the Kuwaiti ambassador living in our office there for about a month, and willing to pony up really vast amounts

Q: Their money was basically in Iraq ...

KEENE: Yes, and some of it here, outside, Switzerland probably, too, for all I know. Yes, they had billions. As always, other people were trying to use this crisis to...I remember the Turkish desk, in particular, was “Ah well, now's our chance to get some Saudi money to bolster the Turks. Even Uruguay, to join the coalition, they wanted the U.S. Army to buy their meet for rations, and it just went on and on, and everybody wanted something. So, we spent some time beating that sort of thing off.

Q: What was your impression being back there; was this a pretty experienced, well-oiled machine that was dealing with the problem?

KEENE: Yes, it really was. Pretty soon we had the task force, but then we had a group that would gather daily to coordinate moves that was interagency, and the bureaus. We'd go over really all the issues with the assistant secretary everyday. This meeting was soon dubbed “vespers.”

Q: Who was that?

KEENE: It was John Kelly. We'd have a morning meeting and an afternoon meeting, and the morning meeting was with Deputy Assistant Secretary David Mack and the afternoon meeting with Kelly. And then the task force was always there, so there was good coordination with the task force.

Q: Were you there during the actual war?

KEENE: Yes.

Q: What was the feeling before the war started; what were you getting? You know, you all were looking at this; how did you think this was going to go?

KEENE: We had moved massive forces into the area, and I don't know; most people couldn't seem to read those military cables, but I could, because I had all that PM time. I had to explain to them how much stuff was out there. I was pretty confident we were going to win the war; I didn't have much doubt about that. And I didn't have any doubt that it was going to happen. But once it started, in some ways we had less to do. Control passed to DOD much more than during the intense period of diplomacy leading up to it. And then we shifted into preparing for reconstruction of Kuwait, primarily.

Q: Before you get to that point, was anybody talking about, I mean I realize that it had more to do with Iraq—well, it had everything to do with Iraq. But talk about the end game, because it does seem that we put Schwarzkopf into the...said, “You go settle this.” I mean,

after all, we knew that it was going to come to an end. Was anybody working on what we should do?

KEENE: Not so much in my office as the area, whatever they were called then, Iraq-Iran affairs or something, but they had the primary responsibility for that. How much actual planning they did down there, I don't know; whether that was planned or they made it up as the circumstances dictated.

Q: Well, I've interviewed Chas Freeman, who was at one point our ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

KEENE: Yes, I know him very well.

Q: He at one point, he said in an equivalent to a cable, saying, not really to you, but to the Iran-Iraq...I mean, "What is the end game?" I mean, all of this struck me as being a—I don't know what you call it—a blunder or a lack, or something—not to say exactly what wanted, because we left a general there who made a deal about allowing helicopters to fly and all that, which turned out to be counterproductive and has had great consequences as of we speak today.

KEENE: Yes. That's right. I didn't get involved. We did a lot of work on Kuwait, but not on Iraq.

Q: How much were you picking up, even before hand, because a lot of Palestinians had gone to Kuwait and then were in the gulf area? What had you, over your time, before this all happened, picked up about the Kuwaitis?

KEENE: Arrogant, unlikable, too rich for their own good, not well liked.

Q: Was this a problem as you moved into reconstruction and all that; were you finding the UAE and the Saudis and others were getting involved in this? They didn't want to do much for the Kuwaitis.

KEENE: No, they didn't. But Kuwait had their own money. We set up a whole organization, the Kuwait Reconstruction Organization, to deal with that. The Corps of Engineers got involved, and we sent a guy out to live with the Kuwait government in exile; that was Skip Gnehm, and he had a few assistants with him. There was just a lot of thought: what to do with the oil wells, what to do with the infrastructure. I think we were pretty well ready to do that job. Like everything, there were some problems, but it went okay.

Q: You say you left there in 1990. Whither?

KEENE: I spent nine months in the Senior Seminar and then went to Amman. Jordan.

Q: You went there in '91, and you were there from when to when?

KEENE: '91 to '94.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KEENE: Roger Harrison for most of the time. I was charg# for about eight months and then near the very end, Wes Egan arrived.

Q: I've interviewed both of them. Can you describe the attitude towards Jordan when you went out there, at the time?

KEENE: Oh, it was bad times; it was a very strained relationship. They had opposed our invasion of Iraq, and there were demonstrations outside the embassy. People didn't want to deal with us on the ground there. Things were not good.

Q: Were they beginning to settle down, because I would have thought, you know, after time, a lot of the Jordanians, and particularly the Palestinians who worked there, the Kuwaitis had been kind of beastly to them.

KEENE: Yes.

Q: But after you put a half a million troops into Kuwait and all that, I would have thought that they would have sort of bowed to force majeure or something like that. Is it okay or not?

KEENE: No. I think the government was interested in maintaining a relationship and probably interested in gradually improving it; but the war had been so unpopular domestically, that they were not in a position to move too fast. Jordan did something like 80 per cent of its trade with Iraq. So, they were hurting financially, too. And they were hard put to get any oil, for that matter. Iraq had supplied virtually all its oil.

Q: When you got there, what were you getting—before you went out, actually, about King Hussein. What was the feeling towards him?

KEENE: I guess it would depend who you spoke with, but there were a lot of people who were bitter, who felt that he had betrayed us; an old ally and friend should have been more forthcoming. There were those who understood that he was in a hard spot, too,

Q: Well, he really was.

KEENE: Yes.

Q: I've seen this happen at other times. This is a Washington syndrome, where if somebody, particularly a small country, does something at a time when we have great interest in a situation, and one of the small countries doesn't go along with us, we get not

only bitter, but there are people who are trying to take it out on them. I imagine you've run across that.

KEENE: Oh yes. There's that, for sure, and it's always somebody on the Hill who wants to make a few political points. It's the nature of the beast.

Q: You were DCM again? What was the embassy doing?

KEENE: Well, they had actually cut way back on the number of people who were out there. It was felt that with so many demonstrations and so much bad feeling, that it was dangerous. So it was kind of small. I got there and the next morning there was some high level visitor coming in. So they were starting now to try to put things back together; just at the very early phases of doing that. Which was good for me; I mean, first day there I met the foreign minister and this guy and that guy and got going pretty quickly. I found that they were, well, so many of them were Palestinians, but the Jordanians, too, were like them —hospitable people, even though they might not like your policies. Bound by that Arab hospitality, and they loved to talk, and it was just easy to meet people and start picking up on what was going on.

Q: Was there concern at the time and while you were there, that King Hussein might be overthrown and something of a radical government might come in?

KEENE: Not really. There always was the chance that he might be assassinated, but not that he would be overthrown. The military was viewed as loyal to the king; they were really the only people who could have done that. Of course, he paid a lot of attention to his military, too. The King was really, genuinely very popular. But, for its size, it's a pretty impressive country. Education is a high value; a pretty literate population. Some pretty impressive ministers and generals.

Q: Maybe in some ways they've been sort of blessed by not having oil, which seems to basically create a wealthy, indolent class.

KEENE: Yes. No oil, no oil at all. And not much else. There's a little phosphorus, phosphate, but not much.

Q: Well, I mean, I would have thought that the Jordanians must have had a rather heavy exodus of Palestinians who had been working in Kuwait.

KEENE: Yes, they did.

Q: Who had basically been a pretty spoiled group. I mean, they'd done very well for themselves there, and all of a sudden, here they were, destitute.

KEENE: Yes, there was a large number. I forget the figure now, but it was significant. And that put further strains on a not all that wealthy social net there. They seem to have—and this was a big issue at first, but by the time I left it wasn't much. They seem to have been absorbed, at least in an acceptable way. Anyway, I think it was Baker who visited, because I think he had said he would make good on his pre-war promise to try to reinvigorate the peace process, and he was making the rounds.

Q: This was moving up to Madrid?

KEENE: Yes. The first steps

Q: Baker came to Jordan, did he?

KEENE: Yes, several times before I was finished.

Q: The first time after the war...was it sort of a frosty meeting, or how did it go?

KEENE: It wasn't too bad, because of the subject. They were interested in seeing the peace process revived, so they welcomed this initiative. Baker was very good; he seemed to be able to get along with people pretty well. He knew his stuff, made good presentation.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship between Jordan and the West Bank...I mean,now you're looking at it from the other side of the river.

KEENE: Right.

Q: What was your impression?

KEENE: Well, realistically, I think the king had his supporters, he had several on his payroll, but he had lost it, and it wasn't going to revert to Jordan. And I think they recognized that, but they still wanted to play those games to keep up whatever amount of influence they could. They hated Arafat.

Q: Well, they'd been through the Black September, back in 1970.

KEENE: Right. And they tried to kill the king. I used to play tennis with a former primer minister who would show you the bullet holes that he got in that assassination attempt. No love lost. Nevertheless, for their own reasons, they wanted the peace process to succeed; and it was hard for them to move without some Palestinian movement. With a population over half Palestinian, they are very sensitive to the public opinion in that part of their population. Within Jordan, there are significant strains between Palestinians and others: and there's discrimination and fighting for power, influence, and all these kind of things that they try very hard to keep below the surface, but its there. So for their own reasons, they wanted to see some movement on this. You couldn't cut a separate deal.

Q: Well, were you aware of Jordanian-Israeli relations at the time. I mean, apparently it had been going on for years.

KEENE: Yes, and it went on during this period. The king would get in his helicopter and fly over for the meeting. From time to time, he'd smuggle in some Israeli officials for meetings. I don't know that we found out about every one of them, but we knew what was going on.

Q: Did congress people come over to Jordan while you were there?

KEENE: Yes. After the peace process started up again, they did. Right after the war there really weren't many, but then they started coming again, in increasing numbers. And so eventually, it was pretty heavy.

Q: Was there a pretty heavy divide between sort of the Palestinians and the, I guess you call them the Bedouins?

KEENE: East Bankers, yes. A lot of them originally were Bedouin, originally tribal, but modernized. Yes, that was real serious difference—many cutting remarks, in private.

Q: Given the situation there, was the PLO...had they made any sort of amends, or was there any reconciliation at all between the Jordanian government and the Arafat people?

KEENE: At an official level there was; Arafat was being received again by the palace and was speaking to the king. No love lost, but as a practical matter. So he would visit Amman every couple of months. The PLO had an embassy.

Q: What about the other Arab states: Egypt, particularly, Saudi Arabia, Syria? What were they doing in Jordan?

KEENE: I don't recall that they were all that active. The Egyptians are always good and professional. Despite the chaos of their country, they have a pretty good foreign service. I didn't see a lot of the Saudis.

Q: Did Iraq have representation?

KEENE: Yes, oh yes. For sure.

Q: Could we deal with the Iraqis?

KEENE: I think for a while we couldn't, at least until the peace was agreed, if I remember correctly. And then we didn't see them much, except at diplomatic corps gatherings. They weren't a big player, but after awhile they became important again to the Jordanians, because they started providing oil again, as they had prior to the war—mostly trucked in. I guess some went down to Aqaba by ship after they cleared the channel out, which took a while. So that by the time I had left they were providing about 100 percent of their oil—88, 85, or 90 percent of their oil.

Q: Was Iran at all a factor there or not?

KEENE: Not a big one. They did have a mission, were suspected of occasional nefarious dealings, but they didn't have a big impact.

Q: Was Syria causing trouble or anything?

KEENE: Not at that time. They had, earlier. It wasn't too bad with Syria then; the border was open—it was a bit chaotic, but lots of people going back and forth.

Q: How about for you all; could you get around to various places?

KEENE: Yes, we used to go up to Damascus, Syria and other places.

Q: Did we have much of a, say, like a USIA organization there in Amman?

KEENE: In Amman, yes, we did, definitely.

Q: A library and all that?

KEENE: We had the library, the speakers, the programs, the international visitors—a full gamut.

Q: By the time you got there, had we a pretty good cadre of Jordanians who had been to the United States on visitor's visas, or educated there, come back?

KEENE: Yes—It's known as the Georgetown (Georgetown University) mafia. I think half the cabinet was educated at Georgetown. We have a lot of students here, yes.

Q: They ever have Georgetown alumni gatherings?

KEENE: Actually, they did, every now and then. They really had some pretty talented people.

Q: Well, in a way, it must have been at least more intellectually stimulating than being in Oman.

KEENE: Oh yes, for sure, it was. These were very cosmopolitan people who were well informed...and liked to talk!

Q: From your Jordanian contacts, was there any particular feeling about how the Arab-Israeli—well, the Arab-Israeli problem was not yet settled. I mean, was there a feeling of hope because of Madrid and all that, or not?

KEENE: There might have been a little hope, but there was no euphoria. The road was rocky. And they needed the Palestinians to at least do enough that they weren't looked at as being betrayed by unilateral moves.

Q: How was Arafat viewed that you get from your contacts?

KEENE: Very negatively...and that includes Palestinians. He was a symbol, but he wasn't viewed as a very good leader or very good administrator, and he was very corrupt.And they knew it.

Q: Was there any major incident or visits while you were there? I'm just wondering, you know, if either political...I don't think you had a presidential visit?

KEENE: No. Secretarial: five, six, ten, I don't know how many there were—a lot.

Q: But these were of such a nature that it was shuttle type?

KEENE: Yes, a lot of it was.

Q: So that didn't—you know. Put quite a burden on you all.

KEENE: Oh yes, sure. You know, it takes a lot of work to support those things. No. One incident stands out that...toward the end, the king got cancer and went to the Mayo Clinic for treatment. And the word was that he had substantially recovered—it turned out not to be true, but that's what people thought. And when he came back, it was like something you'd never seen. I mean, millions of people turned out into the streets. And he rode through the crowds; he got out of his armored car and got on the roof of the car and drove. A tumultuous welcome. Quite moving. And then, of course, later, it recurred, or whatever, and he passed away.

Q: Well then, you left there in 1994? Where did you go?

KEENE: Back to Washington. No, actually, no. Before we leave Jordan, I guess I should mention that I did go to Madrid for the peace conference.

Q: What were you doing there?

KEENE: They brought all the DCMs (deputy chiefs of mission). And then Roger got in a traffic accident on his way to Madrid and never made it. And because of the fact that nobody recognized the PLO at the time, we had to set up the joint Jordanian-Palestinian

delegation in Madrid, which was a very useful diplomatic device, but it meant responsibility for two delegations instead of one. So that was interesting, too.

Q: So what were you doing?

KEENE: We were assigned to the delegation as their liaison with the conference and with the secretary's party.

Q: You were sort of carrying messages back and forth?

KEENE: Yes...and actually negotiating arrangements. You know, “If he gets an armored car, I want an armored car. If they get an office with three rooms, we want an office with three rooms.” And the politics of it—"Please don't say this in your speech. We want everybody to get along at least well enough to get through this so we can get the process going.” And advising the Jordanian prime minister to shake hands with him—the Israeli—he didn't want to. This was not going to make a very good photo op. In the end, they did shake hands for the camera. It was very intense; it was about ten days, I think. There was a lot of back and forth. The delegations were in hotels, and we were in another hotel, and shuttling back and forth; and then setting up the venues, which were in a palace—a Spanish palace. Getting the delegations settled in, getting the Palestinians to talk to the Jordanians. I had, I think, a real advantage there in that I had known, in my previous incarnation, about three quarters of the Palestinian delegation personally, so that helped a great deal. That all worked out, and in fact you can see in retrospect that we didn't get the deal we wanted, but it actually did lead to the Israeli-Jordanian agreement. And then the work afterwards on setting up all those interlocking committees that we had....you've probably had somebody describe all of this before, so I don't need to go over that ground. We had the joint committees for water and natural resources and refugees and economic development, and, I don't know—there were a lot of them. And the idea there was just to keep everybody talking to each other constantly—at various levels, technical levels, official levels.

Q: Well, did you find both sides—Israeli and Jordanian sides—wanting to get into, I mean, were they on board with the idea, you know, that the more we get together, the better, the easier things will work out, or not?

KEENE: Yes. It was important to them to reach an agreement on things like water and right of return and trade and all the modalities of what peace would really look like. So that really also was a major undertaking and took a lot of time.

Q: I would have thought the right of return would have been a real sticking point, because to my mind, it's just not going to happen, really, except in isolated incidents, the same way that probably the settlement issue...You're really going to have a settlement— if they don't return the settlements with some exception, maybe, they're not going to be there.

KEENE: I think that's right. We need to find...Really that's what we've tried to do for years, find some face saving answer where both sides can claim victory and not a whole lot happens...probably involving some payments to the people who aren't getting back.

I should also mention the Multinational Interdiction Force or MIF. This naval force was put together to enforce the sanctions on Iraq during and after the war. After Jordan began cooperating with us again, the virtual embargo of Aqaba, Jordan's only port, became a major irritant. I worked for many months with the Chief of the Royal Court, Marwan Kassim, to work out an agreement whereby Lloyds of London would have a team in Aqaba inspecting all cargo and certifying that it met the terms of the embargo.

Q: Okay. We'll pick this up the next time. You leave Amman, and whither?

KEENE: Los Alamos.

Q: Los Alamos! Why Los Alamos?

KEENE: Well, it seemed to be the only job available. They had one position out there in return for which the Department of Energy got a science attach# slot in London.

Q: So you were sort of a political observer at Los Alamos?

KEENE: They had something called the Center for National Security Studies—whose major task was to advise the Lab director about major political developments that could affect the Lab's mission, or atomic energy, or proliferation issues.

Q: So you were there from when to when?

KEENE: Just for a year. '94-95.

Q: Today is the 27th of February, 2007. We're up to 1994? What were you up to?

KEENE: I was out in Los Alamos on a one-year exchange program with the department of energy.

Q: What was your job at Los Alamos?

KEENE: Well, they had a Center for National Security Studies—a pretty small group of people who were doing non-technical work, alerting the lab director and his hierarchy to non-proliferation developments or political developments that could affect the Lab, or perform studies in non-proliferation and foreign policy angles of their work.

Q: Did you find people paid much attention to you, or were you a bit a fish out of water?

KEENE: Well, I don't think we were mainstream, because it's a place that was populated by nuclear physicists and nuclear chemists and doing scientific, technical work. But, as I said, they paid attention, because they would send—sometimes, at least— representatives to international negotiations to supply the specific scientific knowledge that you might need

and some of those things. They understood that the politics of it all played a role and that it was useful to stay informed with what was going on.

Q: Well this is of course the period that the Soviet Union had sort of collapsed, and in a way it was sort of a...well, it was a pretty positive period, wasn't it? I mean, both sides were looking for disarmament and trying to take down a lot of the Cold War apparatus as far as nuclear...

KEENE: Right—in fact, the Lab set up a whole separate organization to deal with that and it frequently traveled to the Soviet Union to help in safeguarding the nuclear material and drawing up protocols for recovering it and taking some to the States to reprocess, actually, and dispose of. In fact, that finally led to the demise of the Center for National Security Studies, because they took all of our budget, finally, and put it into this other—I forget the name of it—but it was a group which was leading the charge for cooperation with the Russian nuclear program.

Q: Did you have Soviet counterparts—by this time they would be Russian counterparts?

KEENE: That group did; I didn't. And they went over there frequently; they visited Soviet nuclear facilities, the Soviet counterpart to the Lab, like Los Alamos. That was still the active program.

Q: Well then, you were there for a year. Then what?

KEENE: Yes. Only about ten months after they got rid of the Center. And I came back to Washington after trying and failing to find another overseas job, and ended up in the historian's office.

Q: How long were you in the historian's office?

KEENE: The better part of five years. A long time.

Q: What were you doing there?

KEENE: I compiled a volume entitled The Intelligence Community: 1950-1960. There had been an earlier volume from 1945 to 1950. I did a lot of work on that in conjunction with the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and some of the other—DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) and a few of the other intelligence agencies—INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research). Had the blessing of the CIA historian, and now—I don't know what it is...five years later—it still hasn't been published. Still in clearance. And I've been told it was broken into two volumes now; they thought they might be able to get away with five years now and five years later.

Q: I would have thought that this would have been almost a non-starter, I mean, particularly with the CIA and all not wanting to divulge anything.

KEENE: Yes, that turned out to be the case, but the historian's office has a committee that advises it and they pushed rather hard for more disclosure of the role of intelligence in foreign policy, and it did seem like it was possible because it was, like, 40 years ago and not too much of that stuff is still supposed to be classified. But it proved very difficult to get the clearance.

Q: Did you get any feel for...particularly that period...well, particularly the CIA was still working with people who are used to dealing with...who had been in World War II, and this is a very operative thing. I mean these are guys who during the world war would get the jeeps and go out and blow up things and do stuff. They hadn't really been completely housebroken as far as dealing with the niceties of the peacetime. I mean, did you find some of those?

KEENE: Yes, there was a good deal of it buried in some of the files. I remember one: It was discovered in FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) files, where despite the internment of all the Japanese in World War II, they were now planning to intern a whole bunch of

people again during the Cold War. There were all kinds of those things, and it was a transition period. In the early part of it, particularly, there were a lot of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) veterans in the Agency; some crazy stuff was thought of—not necessarily carried out. Most of that era was the Eisenhower era, and he had a fairly disciplined system of staffing everything out and making sure that lots of the appropriate people looked at things before they happened. Of course, we had the U-2 (spy plane), but...

Q: We had the U-2 and actually set up the Bay of Pigs, too. I still saw something just the other day about the Guatemala ...

KEENE: Yes, that's in there, too—that period. Ironic, too.

Q: Archibald Roosevelt and all that sort of thing. Everybody's written about that, but... Out of this, did you get any feel...was there a pretty good system of sharing intelligence, or were the major intelligence elements—the CIA, the FBI, Defense Intelligence Agency —and INR, were they all kind of, sort of operating very much separately, and was there much coordination at the time?

KEENE: I thought they operating quite separately. In fact, it was even before DIA; at that time, each service had its own intelligence arm in the 50s. Later on you got DIA. Each service had their own intelligence service, the FBI and CIA were in constant turf battles. At the time, when this started, the FBI had responsibility for Latin America.

Q: Then during World War II they were all over Latin America; they had been handed that.

KEENE: Yes, and it took quite a bit to get them out. No, I didn't feel that there was great coordination. It was just the very beginning of the idea of an intelligence community, and that was sort of shaped and formed as time went on.

Q: Well, did you find that in your work in putting this together, not getting maybe the final clearance, did you feel you got on fairly well with the other organizations?

KEENE: Yes, yes. We had a very good working relationship with the CIA historian's office. DIA was pretty cooperative; INR was, of course. FBI not so much, but they didn't have all that much. Touched base with pretty much everybody by the time I finished.

Q: Well you did this for five years—takes you up to about 2000.

KEENE: Yes. I should add that during that period I went up to the UN (United Nations) General Assembly for those five years, too, for three months each year.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

KEENE: I was a senior advisor for Middle Eastern issues to the delegation.

Q: What were the issues during those five years that we were particularly interested in?

KEENE: It was not exclusively, but the vast majority of the issues were Israeli-Palestinian. So we had to do a lot of work with the Palestinian delegation and the Israeli delegation, and the EU (European Union) played a fairly important role up there because they could probably count on 50 votes on any given issue. But it tended to be pretty much the same resolutions year after year. After you got used to them, you could do them in your sleep. But the interaction made it an interesting experience.

Q: What was your impression of—let's take some of those delegations—the Israeli delegation.

KEENE: It varied. Their ambassador was usually a political appointee, and if he was Likud, you got a very hard line, uncompromising reaction. If he was Labor, you got a much more

cooperative, get-along-with-my-colleagues type of reaction. But they'd still vote against what they viewed as anti-Israeli resolutions, but the atmosphere could change quite a bit.

Q: But did you feel that Israelis...did you feel any within the United States domestic pressures to keep us in line?

KEENE: Oh, yes, and they did. Just the General Assembly's agenda hadn't changed much in probably 20 years, so that was something that everybody had gotten accustomed to. Yes, but some of the ambassadors couldn't spend a lot of time at the UN; they were around giving speeches or testimony. Under the political appointee, they had a very professional staff of diplomats who knew exactly what they were doing. It was a pleasure to work with them.

Q: How about the Palestinian delegation?

KEENE: Interesting. They had—it was small—maybe four or five people, and only two ever seemed to say a word or do anything: the ambassador, who was the political appointee—he's now the foreign minister, or he was. He was related to Arafat—some obscure brother-in-law kind of way, and the number two guy, who was really sharp as a tack and knew exactly his way around at the UN, knew all the issues; affable, got along with everybody—very effective.

Q: Did you get a feel for Arafat's rule, because I think everybody who, on the American side, has come up trying to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian thing sort of despaired because of Arafat, who they thought was really a problem.

KEENE: Yes. Well I later met him two or three times, actually. Not there; in those days we weren't talking to him. Yes, he was a strange man—very hard to understand and figure out. Work all night, sleep all day. At the UN it was even more weird because Farouk Kaddoumi—Arafat had to buy him off, I guess, he had given him responsibility for what went on at the UN, and he was a real hard-liner, so it made it even more complicated. You

could talk to people like, later on—no, earlier—I had talked to people in the Palestinian Embassy in Jordan, and they would tell you “I'm a Kaddoumi man; and he's an Arafat man. They had these factions—PFLP and DFLP and this and that and the other thing. It was a complex organization, and it wasn't very efficient politically.

Q: Did you see...I mean, at the time, you were doing this up until 2000, did you see light at the end of the tunnel or anything?

KEENE: Well, I've spent a lot of time in Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman, working on this issue, and I always have thought it's solvable, but it takes—and I think we all know what the outcome ought to be—what it ought to look like. And I think that's been clear for a long time.

Q: Well, my understanding is, and I've heard it again and again, no real return in what is now Israel, and the settlements essentially will have to go, except for a few. And that's what it is, isn't it? And the '67 boundaries.

KEENE: Yes. Accommodations have to be made; you'll have to create some illusions. You'll have to give some money to those refugees who don't come back. You'll have to have a capital, maybe.

Q: Did you get any feel for the other Arab delegations that essentially they rather like to have the Arab-Israeli issue around, because it seems to be the one thing that bound the Arab nations together?

KEENE: Yes, I think there was some of that, and a lot of cynicism—it's been around so long—and a lot of dislike among some of them for the Palestinians. The amount of involvement by the delegations varied greatly, some doing almost nothing except go to cocktail parties, some being very professional. The Egyptians, as usual, had a good diplomatic service.

Q: How about the Jordanians?

KEENE: They were good, too, up there, at the UN. The ambassador became a good friend of mine; he was a professional, life-long diplomat. He was very good. And then they put a prince up there as the number two; I guess they were training him.

Q: How about Syria?

KEENE: Very negative. We could deal with them, and we did; we met with them every session, frequently, but they were always very negative.

Q: Saudi Arabia?

KEENE: Not very central to the process.

Q: Was Iran in the business at all?

KEENE: Yes. They had a delegation there. They worried more about their own problems. It was the Iran-Iraq war time, and we weren't really talking to them; we had broken relations with them. We used the UN as a venue to talk to them when we wanted to, as we did with the North Koreans. It had its uses.

Q: Did India and Pakistan, both with significant Muslim populations, did they play any role?

KEENE: Not so much. They also focused on their own conflict—more the sub-continent than the Middle East. Both pretty strong delegations, pretty active delegations.

Q: You mentioned the European Union. Were there any particularly significant players among the European Union members?

KEENE: Whoever the president was at the time. He usually would take the lead role—that's the way that group seemed to work.

Q: The president of the EU?

KEENE: Yes. Whichever country had the presidency.

Q: Every six months.

KEENE: Yes, right. But there were strong delegations within it: the UK is very strong, Germany is stronger than you might think, not being one of the permanent five. The French were not. When things were going all right, it did; it improved the atmosphere. We never kidded ourselves that passing these resolutions was really going to affect anything very much.

Q: What was your impression of the UN—both the apparatus, the people there, and also its effectiveness on this problem that's been around for 60 years or so?

KEENE: Well, on the major political issues of the day, I don't think it's very effective. I think many of its technical agencies play a very important role in making the world work: postage, and aircraft, and all of those things that they do—the health. But politically, no, and at best the General Assembly has no power; all the power is in the Security Council. Sometimes that can work, but it's hard building the consensus to get things through.

Q: Well then, in 2000, what did you do?

KEENE: I went to the Press Office.

Q: Who was the spokesperson?

KEENE: Richard Boucher.

Q: What were you doing?

KEENE: Basically just a run-of-the-mill job, getting him prepared for the briefings, checking the wires (news services), writing the guidance, getting the guidance cleared, answering press queries; kind of routine.

Q: How long were you doing that?

KEENE: Until I retired, about two years.

Q: Did you find, was there a change when the Bush Two administration came in?

KEENE: Well, they kept Boucher on, so we didn't...I mean, it was a change. We were a little surprised that they didn't change the spokesman, but they didn't.

Q: Did you feel...was there was a change in atmosphere, or anything?

KEENE: Well, we had Powell. We all liked Powell. I think he insulated us a little bit. He was a reasonable guy to deal with; Boucher seemed to get along well with him, so things in the Press Office went along pretty well. I mean, there were major changes, obviously; the buildup to Iraq Two and all of that.

Q: Well, how did sort of the 9/1l—the attack on the World Trade Center—how did that affect you all?

KEENE: I was sitting in the Press Office watching the TV when that happened. One thing about the Press Office is you've always got a TV turned to the news channel, where the TV is on all the time. Did that affect the Press Office? No, I don't think it did a lot; you know, it was a busy period, we did a lot of work.

Q: I'm sure you did.

KEENE: A lot of overtime. It was a pretty good office, as offices go; it was pretty collegial, and a lot of people had been there a long time.

Q: Did you come away with any impression of the State Department press corps?

KEENE: Yes, and it wasn't all that favorable, either.

Q: In what respect?

KEENE: Well, they just didn't seem to be as well informed as people who cover foreign policy ought to be—particularly those who had been doing it for a while. There were some good ones, and some not so good.

Q: I can always remember, during the Gulf One, the scene when somebody in the Pentagon, asked "What does the president of Jordan think of this?" And I thought, Oh, my God."

KEENE: There you go. There was a corps of regulars and I knew people would sort of come every now and then, and there were a couple, we got a couple, of the right-wing zealots who finally started showing up. They were just sort of out to get the Department, to catch us in mistakes. One of them wrote a book; he was just too much.

Q: How about the foreign press corps? Did you get any feel for that?

KEENE: Well, some of them would occasionally show up; like we had a guy from Greece, and he would come and he would ask his one question about Greece, and then he'd leave. There were a few foreign journalists who came, but not too many. You probably know we have a Foreign Press Center, too, which was run by USIA; now it's run by the Department, in a different building, and more of them...I did a few weeks TDY over there. So they hung out over there more than they would come to the main briefing center.

Q: Was it the usual mixed bag?

KEENE: Yes. Some of them, pretty professional, had been covering the States maybe three or four years; they knew a lot. Some of them, you wondered, maybe they had been picked up as free lance—didn't seem to be that involved.

Q: Well then you retired in 2002. What was the feeling that you came away with at that time about the rationale and how we were presenting going to war with Iraq?

KEENE: Very negative. It just seemed to me at the time, as it does now, that they in the leadership there—the President, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Feith, Wolfowitz, all of that crew, had just decided that they were going to go to war, and the facts weren't going to get in the way.

Q: Was this reflected by others?

KEENE: Yes, it was fairly widespread. And it was not going to work out very well; they didn't seem to understand the potential for civil war, the Kurds, the Shias, the Sunnis, and that they were told and just chose to ignore it.

Q: You had been a Near Eastern hand and seen this...what was your impression of Iraq at the time, and you might say, the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz crowd—I guess Rice was in there too—were presenting, we'd go in and be met with flags and all...what were you hearing from your fellow officers and that you felt yourself from what you'd observed?

KEENE: I was thinking that it was totally unnecessary, that Iraq was not a threat, that it could easily be contained, as it had been, for many long years; that it would be destabilizing to the Middle East, and that we were going to have a lot harder time. I think a lot of people knew that.

Q: Well, when you retired in 2002, what have you been up to?

KEENE: Well, I did another six months on contract with the Press Office, and then I started spending more time in Maine.

Q: Where in Maine?

KEENE: A place called Ocean Park, Maine—southern Maine—a cottage that we bought in the early 80s, thank God, because I couldn't afford it now. We go up there now four or five months a year. Most of our family is in New England, so that's convenient. And we've been traveling more, and reading more, and sleeping later...and having a good time.

Q: Great! Well, I want to thank you very much.

End of interview